

Regent meets European deputies

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Saturday called for establishing a common ground for the three main tracks through which the Middle East is being dealt with, Helsinki, Barcelona and Madrid, stressing the need to give due attention to economic, security, human and cultural factors. During a meeting with a European parliamentary delegation, Prince Hassan discussed efforts being exerted to remove obstacles facing the peace process. The Regent stressed the importance of increasing economic and cultural cooperation between the Middle East and European countries. He also called for dealing with security in a comprehensive manner, pointing out that the Middle East is the sole region that lacks a centre for defusing and solving conflicts.

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Regent tells intellectuals:

Dialogue, based on facts, is road to Arab renaissance

'Intellect, reason should prevail over political emotions'

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, emphasised the need for the Arab Nation to adopt the principles of dialogue and to pursue the course of scientific research in order to transform aspirations into facts.

In an address at the opening of a seminar organised by the Arab Thought Forum (ATF), Prince Hassan said that every nation is aware of the challenges facing it and takes measures to deal with them, but this does not mean that it must live in isolation from the world community and it should rather readjust its position to ensure adaptation to the world in a manner that would serve its own objectives.

Prince Hassan, who is the ATF's president, said there was need for openness to the world and for renouncing all forms of bigotry and opposition merely for the sake of opposing others' views.

Perhaps the most dangerous challenge facing the Arab Nation is the task of adaptation to the information revolution without infringing on Arab identity and culture, the Crown Prince pointed out at the seminar entitled: Arab thought vis a vis international developments... democracy and globalisation.

He said that advanced nations turn to deep study, analysis and logic before reaching solutions, and they never base their decisions

on individual work nor upon sentiments which normally lead to confusion.

In this respect, he called for thought to have a role in dealing with challenges and crises and for defining objectives, stressing the need for expanding the concept of democracy to cater to the requirements of world developments.

He said that in order to deal with the absence of democratic institutions and free political action within the limits of pluralism and the failure of the Arab region to confront world developments, one should give a wider margin of freedom for Arab thought, in order for an individual to better express his views in an objective and constructive manner.

The Regent stressed that believers in human thought realise that the shaping of the future requires a great deal of sacrifice, diligence and patience, adding that the future requires a code of conduct for the struggle against irrationality, ignorance and intellectual intimidation.

In his address attended by Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and other ministers along with scholars, intellectuals and deputies from Jordan and Arab states, the Regent said that the ATF had sought since its inception to draft an effective mechanism that can help enhance Arab culture and reproduce the image of the Arab citizen in

(Continued on page 7)



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan inaugurates an Arab Thought Forum seminar on Saturday (Photo by Yousef 'Allan')

Forum must rejuvenate, tackle Inter-Arab issues

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Rejuvenating the membership of the Arab Thought Forum (ATF) to revitalise the organisation by bringing in new generations was one of the key points discussed at the ATF's eleventh annual meeting Saturday.

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan stressed the importance of youth telling the Jordan Times "we cannot continue to present 'cooked meals' recipes for Arab national-

ism, for example, that do not recognise and respect and involve youth."

The Forum groups a select number of Arab thinkers and scholars and debates contemporary Arab issues hoping to have some impact on policies. The Crown Prince said that the Forum is an important tool in bridging the gap between scholars and intellectuals and in promoting independent thought as it brings together "the left, the right, the Marxist, Islamic thought, and every single shade and hue."

Following the opening session, former ATF Secretary General Ali Oumili, presented a paper on "The Positions of Arab Thinking Towards International Change."

The paper reviewed the nature of governance in the Arab countries and the current positions of Arab thinking towards democratisation and globalisation. "Results on the democratisation front have not been all that encouraging," noted ATF Secretary General

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Suspect arrested over death of Kateb

AMMAN (AFP) — The authorities said Saturday they had arrested a man suspected of killing a demonstrator during pro-Iraqi riots in the southern city of Ma'an in February. A senior Jordanian official said the man, who has not been named, was a resident of Ma'an, 220 kilometres south of the capital. The official, who asked to remain anonymous, said the suspect opened fire on several occasions during the riots on Feb. 20, and that one of the bullets accidentally killed 23-year-old Mohammad Abdullah Al Kateb. He said the suspect was identified after examining weapons seized by the authorities in Ma'an following the riots. The two days of demonstrations in Ma'an on Feb. 20 and 21 also left 23 people injured.



BADEN-BADEN — King Hussein and German President Roman Herzog look at the trophy which His Majesty received at the German Media Award 1997 ceremony. The award was given by editors of newspapers, magazines and TV stations to the King because of his efforts to further Mideast peace (Reuters photo)

King urges Netanyahu to revive peace process

'Those who stand as an obstacle in the path of peace are imprisoning themselves within their own narrow minds'

By Fairouz Abu Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

BADEN-BADEN, Germany — His Majesty King Hussein urged Israel's hard-line Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to help revive the Middle East peace process warning that the continued deadlock on the Palestinian-Israeli track was threatening the whole region.

The King, speaking late on Friday after receiving the 1997 German Media Award for his dedication and commitment to peace, called on Mr. Netanyahu to respect peace agreements with the Palestinians and to resume bilateral talks, stalled over a further Israeli West Bank troop pullback.

He said the region was passing through a very crucial stage and expressed hope that the foundations of peace will be laid on all Arab-Israeli peace tracks so that a settlement can be comprehensive.

He criticised Mr. Netanyahu, who opposes the basis of the peace process, launched in Madrid in 1991.

"We all agree and we must insist to have agreements reached as sacrosanct," King Hussein said. "We cannot change our minds... we cannot alter facts because we have not thought enough..."

Mr. Netanyahu took over in June 1996 from the Labour-led Israeli government that signed peace deals with Jordan and the PLO.

"Those who stand as an obstacle in the path of peace are imprisoning themselves within their own narrow minds," he added.

The King also blasted Mr. Netanyahu for saying that he would not accept any imposed ideas from the United States, the main broker of the seven-year-old peace process, to break the impasse.

"So, when we hear some say, as a colleague in the region recently said, that we do not accept any dictates, it is not a question of dictate," he added.

"But when things go wrong, the U.S. and our friends in Europe are duty-bound to come and help

with balanced suggestions. It is our duty to achieve durable peace for the generations to come," King Hussein stressed.

The audience at the ceremony in the main German spa town of Baden-Baden included German President Roman Herzog, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, and former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Mr. Arafat himself won the same Media prize in 1995 together with the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was awarded posthumously.

The King, flanked by Her Majesty Queen Noor, praised Mr. Arafat's long struggle to attain Palestinian aspirations and assured him of Jordan's continued backing.

The King also said Mr. Netanyahu could be sure of the Kingdom's support as long as he backed peace efforts.

"I hope and ask that he will commit himself to our course, the course of peace

(Continued on page 7)

Ross launches fresh Mideast peace bid

TEL AVIV (R) — U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross began a fresh mission on Saturday to revive stalled peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians with Washington gloomy about the prospects for a breakthrough.

Mr. Ross launched his trip with talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and was also due to meet Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, possibly on Sunday.

He was driven into Mr. Netanyahu's residence through a side entrance, avoiding about 50 protesters from the Israeli Peace Now movement. They held up a poster depicting Mr. Netanyahu in diapers strangling a dove of peace.

Mr. Ross, accompanied by Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk, was sent to the region ahead of separate meetings U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will hold with Mr. Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu in London on May 4.

State Department spokesman James Rubin said on Friday that the peace process, at a deadlock for more than a year, was now "increasingly moribund."

"We have no reason at this point to know that this meeting will yield anything but the kind of refusal to make hard decisions that we've seen in the past," Mr. Rubin told reporters.

He said it was "hard to be optimistic" about progress. Washington is seeking a "credible" Israeli troop with-

drawal from a reported 13 per cent of the West Bank in return for tougher Palestinian action against Islamists.

It believes this would lead to negotiations on a final peace settlement that are meant to conclude by May 4, 1999, exactly one year after the London meeting.

Israel has rejected the reported percentage as unacceptable, citing security concerns.

U.S. officials said Mr. Ross expected to pin down precisely how much West Bank land Israel was willing to cede to Palestinians.

"Mr. Ross has arrived to lay the groundwork for the London talks, which are aimed at ending the current crisis over troop withdrawal from the West Bank," a U.S.

official said.

Mr. Arafat said on Saturday that Mr. Ross's mission did not include negotiations with the Palestinian leadership on the U.S. proposals, which he has said he accepts in principle.

"He is coming to push the Israelis to accept the American initiative," Mr. Arafat told reporters in Gaza on his return from a visit to Germany.

Israeli officials have sought to play down expectations for the envoy's visit and the London talks.

David Bar Ilan, Mr. Netanyahu's communications advisor, said Israel was particularly interested in concluding agreements on the opening of an airport and industrial park in Gaza, two

other issues outstanding from interim peace deals.

Israeli Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan told Israel's Channel One television that the cabinet had yet to decide on how much land Israel was willing to give up.

"We still haven't decided on the size or time or percentages," the hardline minister said. "There's no hurry to give things back and there's no hurry to contribute to the destruction of the country."

U.S. Vice-President Al Gore will also try to break the logjam when he visits the Middle East next week. He is due to arrive on Thursday for Israel's 50th anniversary celebrations and will meet both Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Arafat.

Mubarak accuses Netanyahu of failing to honour commitments

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of failing to honour Israeli commitments under signed peace accords, only days before the two leaders are due to meet here.

But Mr. Mubarak also said there were "no problems" between Egypt and the Jewish state, which signed a peace treaty in 1979, according to press reports Saturday.

Mr. Mubarak, who has been increasingly outspoken in his criticism of Israel's hard-line stance in the stalled Palestinian peace negotiations, is due to meet Mr. Netanyahu on Tuesday in Cairo, for their first meeting in a year.

Mr. Mubarak told a group of journalists accompanying him on his brief visit to

Syria Friday that he had accused Mr. Netanyahu many times of "not honouring his commitments and that Egypt supports the law," weekly government newspaper Akhbar Al Yom reported.

"I continue to advise the Israeli prime minister to fulfill his commitments in the interests of all," government daily Al Jomhouriyah quoted him as saying. But he added: "There is no problem between Egypt and Israel, but we are striving to establish stability in the region."

Egypt was the first Arab state to make peace with Israel. Although Egyptian-Israeli relations have been cool, they have further soured since Mr. Netanyahu's right-wing government came to power in 1996.

Lebanon ready to talk to U.N. on Israeli withdrawal

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanon is ready to negotiate with the U.N. secretary general on the deployment of Lebanese troops following an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, the Lebanese president was quoted as saying Friday.

In an interview with Beirut's leading newspaper Al Nahar, President Elias Hrawi reiterated Lebanon's rejection of Israel's demand to discuss security arrangements before a withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

He said Lebanon was willing to discuss with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on the deployment of units from Lebanon's 55,000-strong army in the south following an Israeli withdrawal.

"If the secretary-general wants to negotiate with me [on the Lebanese army deployment], I am ready," Mr. Hrawi was quoted as saying.

Lebanon and Syria, the main power broker here, have rejected Israel's conditional withdrawal offer which was made earlier this month, insisting that U.N. Resolution 425 calls on Israel to unconditionally withdraw from the 10 per cent of Lebanese territory it now occupies.

"If the Israelis want to sit at a table to negotiate on how to withdraw, this is not our problem. Israel has invaded Lebanon," Mr. Hrawi was quoted as saying.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary JTV launches 3rd channel

By Alia Shukri Hamzeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — State-run Jordan Television (JTV), celebrating its 30th anniversary, said on Saturday it will launch a third channel dedicated to sports and cultural events as part of a major plan to refurbish its image, dented by growing popular criticism.

Nasser Judeh, director general of Jordan's Radio and Television, said the new image will include a new JTV logo as well as a comprehensive series of programmes. But he gave no cost estimates.

"Launching a third channel has always been the dream of JTV," he told a news conference, "and now, with God's will, it will come true as of the 1st of May."

Mr. Judeh said the new channel will cover an area that includes Amman, Salt, Zarqa, Irbid, Naour and Aqaba in the first stage. He said the public would be



Jordan Television and Radio Director General Nasser Judeh talks to reporters at a press conference on Saturday (Photo by Yousef 'Allan')

notified about the channel's transmission hours once they are finalised.

JTV, which gained administrative and financial independence from the government earlier this year, has been facing tough competition from scores of Arab and international television stations beamed on world satellites. Citizens have often complained of the JTV's poor programme

quality compared to what is shown on rival stations in the region and abroad. JTV has insisted that budget constraints have limited its choices.

Mr. Judeh said the new channel will complement existing second channel's broadcasting programmes and news bulletins in

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At least six Algerian soldiers die in attack on barracks — papers

ALGIERS (AFP) — At least six soldiers were killed in an attack by suspected Islamists on an army barracks at Larbaa, press reports said Saturday, with some sources putting the death toll as high as 30.

The Al Watan newspaper said six people were killed when the attackers stormed a three-floor villa used as a barracks overnight Tuesday, lobbing explosives into the house and then firing on those who tried to flee.

Al Aci newspaper said its sources agreed that some 30

people died when the building collapsed after a home-made bomb attack.

"The residents heard a series of explosions, followed by gunfire which indicated a violent clash," Al Aci said.

The building was located at a remote mountain site in an area where extremist Armed Islamic Group (GIA) fighters are active, the newspaper said.

Al Watan said that four soldiers had been killed in the initial assault on the building and two were shot as they tried to flee. The attack ended

with the arrival of army reinforcements, who shot dead four of the attackers and wounded several others.

It was the latest in a series of attacks on soldiers this year. On February 19, 27 men were killed in a daylight ambush some 30 kilometres from Tizi Ouzou.

Reports at the time said that several bombs had gone off as a troop convoy passed by. The heavily armed assailants then opened fire on the soldiers.

On April 3, there was another bomb attack on a military convoy in Timidjien but

no casualties were reported.

The daily Al Aci also reported that two gunmen had killed a policeman Friday in central Algiers and then fled.

Earlier this week a GIA commando fired two home-made mortars at the garrison town of Blida, south of Algiers, killing five and wounding about 40 other people.

The highlands overlooking Blida are known to be a haven for the GIA, the most radical Islamist movement fighting the military-backed secular regime.



RALLY FOR PALESTINIAN PRISONERS: A Palestinian student with a mask on his face Saturday flashes the "V" sign in a move to symbolise the situation of Palestinian prisoners during a rally in the West Bank town of Nabulus. More than 3,000 Palestinians are in Israeli jails (AFP photo)

Amnesty slams U.N. rights commission for lack of action

GENEVA (AFP) — Amnesty International roundly condemned the U.N. Commission on Human Rights Friday, accusing it of choosing compromise rather than action on behalf of victims in countries such as Algeria, China, East Timor and Saudi Arabia.

Amnesty delivered a scathing message on the final day of the annual session of the commission, which has been strongly criticised by a number of other human rights defenders too for ignoring major violators of U.N. rights treaties.

"During its six-week session, thousands of people were killed or injured in Algeria, yet the Commission did nothing," an Amnesty statement charged.

"If a blind eye is turned to such blatant and often publicised abuses, what hope can victims not in the international spotlight have?"

In January, the Algerian government said some 26,500 civilians and security person-

nel had died and 21,000 people been injured in political violence since the army intervened in 1992 to keep the now-outlawed Islamic Salvation Front from taking power in elections it was poised to win.

Western estimates have put the toll at more than 60,000 dead since 1992. Algerian opposition parties have spoken of more than 100,000 dead, and massacres have been reported almost daily.

Amnesty said Friday that in the face of the Algerian government's "outright refusal to cooperate" with the commission, the European Union, the United States and Canada "buckled under," admitting they lacked the will to take the action needed.

There was no serious discussion about the desperate need to send an international team to investigate the situation and the plight of the Algerian victims, and member states hid behind a "barrage of contemptible excuses to justify their inaction."

Amnesty said the commission also let Saudi Arabia off the hook and that it backed down from passing a resolution condemning human rights abuses in East Timor, a former Portuguese colony annexed by Indonesia in 1976.

On East Timor, the commission opted for a "weak statement" from its chairman, hailing Jakarta's decision to invite the U.N.'s working group on arbitrary detention to visit the province before next year's commission session.

Scrutiny of China's human rights records was also conspicuously absent, Amnesty said, recalling that the European Union decided not to table a resolution against Beijing before the session opened.

The silence this year "has more to do with policy splits between the EU member states and trade deals than any significant improvement in the human rights situation in the country," Amnesty observed.

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Iranian dissident to visit Germany soon

BONN (R) — An Iranian dissident journalist said in an interview released on Saturday he planned to visit his family in Germany within the next two weeks.

Faraj Sarkuhi also said he had been subjected to "psychological torture" during his one-year jail term for spreading "propaganda" against the Iranian government.

Mr. Sarkuhi told Germany's Der Spiegel magazine that although he would visit his wife and two children, who live in Berlin as political refugees, he would then return to Iran.

"I intend to fly to Germany within the next two weeks. The German embassy issued me with a visa on Saturday, April 18," he said in the interview, released ahead of publication on Monday.

"Like any writer, I would like to live at home, write in my native language and for my people, so I'll return for that reason," said Mr. Sarkuhi, who was released from prison in January.

Speaking about his time in prison, he said: "I was oppressed with unjust, constructed and completely false accusations... it was psychological torture."

Asked if he had been physically mistreated, he replied: "I expected my death all the time, day and night... I still suffer from ear pain, from a lack of hearing, pains in my breastbone, to name just a few of my physical problems."

Mr. Sarkuhi's case caused strains in ties between Bonn and Tehran last year. Germany repeatedly raised the matter with Iranian officials after reports he was arrested at Tehran airport as he was about to leave for Germany.

Jordanians, Palestinians to visit jailed relatives in Kuwait next month

KUWAIT (AP) — A group of 41 Jordanians and Palestinians will arrive next month to visit family members imprisoned in Kuwait, an interior ministry official said Saturday.

The visit, like the three previous ones since 1995, was at the request of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which will also pay the expenses, Colonel Hamed Al Refaai told reporters.

Relations between Kuwait and Jordan were strained because of the Kingdom's perceived tilt toward Baghdad after Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

Col. Refaai, who heads the ministry's department that

coordinates work with international organisations, said Kuwait was keen on facilitating these visits because it respects human rights and international agreements.

Sixteen members of the families are children, he said. They are coming to see 25 prisoners, including one woman.

The families are scheduled to arrive May 4 and stay for three days.

The inmates are serving prison terms of up to seven years for collaborating with Iraqis during the seven-month Iraqi occupation, and for other crimes they were convicted of since the 1991 liberation.

Thousands fill Turkish beach to commemorate Gallipoli battle

CANAKKALE (AP) — Some 5,000 Australians and New Zealanders gathered at a site of the World War I battle of Gallipoli to remember thousands of fallen soldiers and a battle that helped define their nations.

New Zealand Governor Sir Michael Hardie Boys and Australia's minister for immigration and culture, Philip Ruddock, joined in prayers for peace on the 83rd anniversary of one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

Separate services were held at memorials for slain British, French and Turkish sol-

diers. Australia and New Zealand regard the battle as a turning point in their history, when they distanced themselves from Britain and emerged as nations.

Services are held here each year. Some 16,000 troops landed before dawn on April 25, 1915, at a beach on this peninsula in the Dardanelles Strait. The beach was later named Anzac Cove in honour of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, who were ordered by British commanders to advance on Turkish positions in hills above.

NEWS IN BRIEF

100 killed in partisan tribal clashes in western Sudan

KHARTOUM (AP) — Fierce clashes between rival tribes over water and grazing rights have left more than 100 people dead and about 45 villages gutted in western Sudan, a government official was reported as saying Saturday. The clashes and the casualties in West Darfur state occurred during the past four weeks, Mohamed Salih Al Sanousi, a West Darfur minister, told reporters in the state capital Genina on Friday. Mr. Al Sanousi said the clashes between the Rezaigat and Massairi tribes began in January but "renewed fiercely" this month in 68 villages in violation of a reconciliation deal signed by tribal leaders.

Iranian parliamentary speaker visits Oman

MUSCAT (AFP) — Iran's parliamentary speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nuri arrived in Muscat Saturday for a three-day visit aimed at improving ties between the Islamic Republic and its neighbours. Iranian diplomats said. He is the highest-ranking Iranian to visit Oman since the 1979 Islamic revolution, the official news agency IRNA reported. Mr. Nateq-Nuri plans to discuss "regional and international political issues" with senior Omani officials including Sultan Qaboos, the diplomats said.

Algerian Islamists on hunger strike in Morocco jail

RABAT (AFP) — Five detainees who say they belong to Algeria's banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) have been on hunger strike since Monday to demand better prison conditions, judicial sources said Saturday. The five, now inmates at Kenitra prison north of Rabat, are serving sentences ranging from six to 15 years on charges they attempted to smuggle arms into Algeria via Morocco in 1994 and 1995.

U.N. says operations in Mogadishu remain suspended

NAIROBI (AFP) — The U.N. said Saturday its humanitarian operations in the Somali capital would remain suspended while it assesses the security situation there following the recent kidnapping of aid workers. Somali gunmen on Friday released 10 Red Cross and Red Crescent workers after holding them hostage for nine days in a high-walled compound in north Mogadishu. "Mogadishu has become a very dangerous place for international aid workers and U.N. operations remain on hold," the U.N. resident and humanitarian coordinator for Somalia, Dominik Langenbacher, said in a statement released here.

King Hassan to visit Cairo in May to discuss tariff reduction

CAIRO (AFP) — King Hassan II of Morocco is to visit Cairo next month for talks on reducing the tariffs on trade between the two countries, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told the Egyptian news agency MENA Saturday. Mr. Mubarak said the talks would focus on the implementation of tariff reductions, mainly on agricultural goods, which Egypt and Morocco initiated last November.

Saddam plans lavish birthday despite sanctions

BAGHDAD (AP) — President Saddam Hussein will lavishly celebrate his 61st birthday on Tuesday, appearing more firmly in control of Iraq than anytime since the 1991 Gulf war.

The country is already in a festive mood. New Saddam statues and portraits are being unveiled everywhere; government offices are festooned with ribbons; the Baghdad municipality is sprucing up the city and Mr. Hussein's exhibitions are opening in all major towns.

The celebrations promise to be as big as in the past, despite the grinding poverty caused by the U.N. economic embargo imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, sparking the Gulf war to liberate the tiny oil-rich emirate.

Keeping up an annual tradition, birthday cakes will be

cut in every government ministry and branches of the ruling Baath party on Tuesday. The finale will be a fireworks show in Baghdad.

The revelry will provide a brief diversion for the hundreds of children forced by their jobless parents to beg on the city's streets, or for the families whose children have died from lack of medicines. Most Iraqis blame their woes on the sanctions and to many Mr. Hussein remains a hero.

He was born to a poor family on April 28, 1937 in the northern town of Tikrit, where the grandest celebrations will be held: The three Kurdish provinces in northern Iraq outside government control are unlikely to celebrate.

The highlight will be military parades of armed volunteers in big cities.

Sudan presents security pact to Egypt

CAIRO (R) — Sudan's interior minister said in remarks published on Saturday that he has presented a draft security agreement to his Egyptian counterpart as part of Khartoum's efforts to improve ties with its northern neighbour.

"The draft agreement was sent to Egyptian Interior Minister (Habib Al Adli) just days before my visit to Cairo [last week]. It covers Sudan's views on security cooperation," Major General Abdul Rahim Mohammed Hussein told the London-based Al Hayat newspaper in an interview.

He said he had discussed the draft with Mr. Adli at a meeting held last week on the sidelines of a meeting of Arab interior ministers that approved an agreement to combat Muslim militancy. He added that Mr. Adli had

told him the draft formed a "good basis for a security agreement" and would be studied by Cairo.

Egyptian-Sudanese relations deteriorated sharply when Cairo charged Khartoum with helping Islamists who tried to kill President Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995.

Mr. Mubarak has said Sudan's Islamist-oriented government must stop supporting and sheltering Islamists fighting to set up a purist Islamic state in Egypt. Khartoum denies the charges and has criticised Egypt for letting Sudan's opposition in exile operate from Cairo.

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JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 Cartoon — The Pink Panther
16:20 Cartoon — Pumpkin Patch
16:30 French Programmes
18:00 — Skippy
18:30 Drama — The Border Town
19:00 — Le Journal
19:15 — Doc. — Le Tour de France
19:30 — News Headlines
19:35 Life's Most Embarrassing Moments
20:00 Documentary — The People and Places of Africa
20:30 — Doc. — Equinox
21:10 — Drama — Renegade
22:00 — News in English
22:30 — Drama — Silent Witness
23:59 Comedy — The Upper Hand
00:30 — End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:27 — Fajr
05:51 — (Sunrise) Duha
12:33 — Dhuhur
16:12 — Asr
19:16 — Maghreb
20:40 — 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4634590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifeh Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261

showers and winds westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be dusty and cloudy, winds southerly active and seas rough. In the evening, winds will be northerly active and seas calm.

Min/Max temp. 15/18
Aqaba 22/29
Deserts 14/22
Jordan Valley 20/26
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 22, Aqaba 34 Humidity readings: Amman 39 per cent, Aqaba 17 per cent.

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Dr. Youssef Rashid 875792
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab 758848
Dr. Khalil Jhali 784450
Dr. Walid Al Masri 5675485
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Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 4637055
Nairokh pharmacy 4623672
Al Salam pharmacy 4636730
Yacoub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660
Najib pharmacy 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484

Al Quds pharmacy
ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halseh 982799
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 7871111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 7731111
Radio Jordan 7741111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53300
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53300

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdli 56661317
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 46428116
Akileh Maternity 46424412
Jabal Amman Maternity 462262
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 56672279
Al-Ahli, Abdli 56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 7771013
Al-Bashir 77511126
Army, Marka 89161115
Queen Alia Hospital 560224050
Amal Hospital 5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44) 53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone (44) (52700)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
09:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
09:30 Jeddah (RJ)
09:30 Cairo (add) (RJ)
09:35 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:45 Lamaca (RJ)
10:00 Bombay (RJ)
10:00 Beirut (RJ)
10:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
17:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:00 Paris (RJ)
18:50 London (RJ)
19:00 Brussels, Geneva (RJ)
19:00 Madrid, Milan (RJ)
19:10 Athens (RJ)
21:55 Rome (RJ)
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111
Other Flights
06:30 Tel Aviv (LA)
11:00 Saraa, Ta'iz (TY)
12:30 Jeddah (SV)
12:50 Moscow (SU)
13:30 Abu Dhabi (GF)
15:40 Doha (QR)
19:00 Paris (AF)
20:25 Tel Aviv (LA)
21:40 Cairo (MS)
22:20 Istanbul (TK)
23:35 Lamaca (CY)
23:40 Beirut (ME)
01:15 Amsterdam, Beirut (KL)
04:15 London (BA)
Royal Wings (RW)
10:20 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Maika Airport) (RW)
10:35 Tel Aviv (QAIA) (RW)
23:25 Aqaba (Marka Airport) (RW)
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:45 Cairo (add) (RJ)
06:30 Lamaca (RJ)
07:15 Beirut (RJ)
11:30 Aqaba, Rome (RJ)
11:45 Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)

22:00 Frankfurt (RJ)
23:00 Madrid (add) (RJ)
23:59 Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)
01:00 Cairo (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:45 Cairo (add) (RJ)
06:30 Lamaca (RJ)
07:15 Beirut (RJ)
11:30 Aqaba, Rome (RJ)
11:45 Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)
11:50 Madrid (add) (RJ)
12:20 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:20 Frankfurt (RJ)
12:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:20 London (RJ)
13:20 Athens (RJ)
21:00 New Delhi (RJ)
21:10 Cairo (RJ)
21:20 Jeddah (RJ)
22:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:30 Damascus (RJ)
22:40 Bangkok (RJ)
22:40 Saraa (RJ)
00:30 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)
Other Flights
06:15 Beirut (ME)
07:15 Tel Aviv (LA)
07:30 Paris (AF)
07:35 Damascus, London (BA)
07:50 Frankfurt (LY)
12:00 Al Haddad (TH)
14:00 Jeddah (SV)
14:10 Moscow (SU)
14:25 Doha (GF)
14:30 Doha (QR)
21:10 Tel Aviv (LA)
22:40 Cairo (MS)
02:15 Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)
Royal Wings (RW)
08:00 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
08:45 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)
21:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Home

Jordan ren Queen Mon

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordanians today remember the late Queen Mother Zayn Al Shara, who passed away four years ago after a difficult life. The late Queen Mother contributed a great deal to Jordan's social and humanitarian work. She led the Jordanian women's efforts of Jordanian women to gain their rights, which the Jordanian constitution had guaranteed for them. The late Queen Mother contributed to the advancement of the status of Jordanian women and enabled them to

NEWS IN

Talhouni appointed ambassador

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree appointing Ambassador Talhouni plenipotentiary to France and ambassador to the Vatican.

Car accidents kill 10, injure 254

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian Road Transport Authority (RTA) reported that 10 people were killed and 254 injured in car accidents last week. The RTA is conducting investigations into these accidents.

NEPCO names acting general manager

AMMAN (Petra) — The National Electric Power Company (NEPCO) has named a new acting general manager. The company announced that Mr. Nasser Al-Najjar will be acting as general manager starting from April 25, following the resignation of Mr. Mohamed Al-Najjar.

Kasbeh, NATO delegation discuss

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordanian Field Marshal Abdul Hakeem Al-Najjar received a NATO delegation in Amman. The delegation discussed the situation in the Balkans and the need for international cooperation.

what's going on

SCANDINAVIAN FILM

"Islandic film 'Children of Nature' (with subtitles in Arabic) at the Cultural Centre at 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

"Norwegian film 'Herman' and 'Dancing Feet' at the Royal Cinema, April 27, at 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

FILM

"Cet obscur objet du désir" at the Cinema, April 27, at 4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

Works by Ecuadorian artist Omeleto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until April 30.

Paintings by Naji Al Sanjari at the Gardens, Street (Tel. 554008).

Works by Yassin Al Mohammad at the Shmeisani (Tel. 568133) and at the Cultural Centre.

Photographic exhibition entitled "A Tale of Two Cities" by Jansen and Savignac at the Cultural Centre, until April 30.

Paintings by Lebanese-American artist Omeleto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until April 30.

"Artist's Book of Art and Poetry" by Naji Al Sanjari, until May 21. Works by Berlin-based Syrian artist Maryam Al-Saleh, and works by other artists.

Special in the Jordan Times

Improving the lot of Jordanian Bedouins without uprooting them is the heart of an ambitious project to revive the Bedouin way of life in Jordan.

Only a fraction of the population of Jordan are Bedouins, but they have played a significant role in the country's history and culture.

Head of the Jordan Bedouin Research and Development Programme, Dr. Youssef Rashid, is leading a project to link the Bedouin way of life with the modern world.

Some of Jordan's other resources, such as its rich cultural heritage, are being exploited through the use of modern technology.

It is

Jordan remembers Queen Mother today

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordanians today remember the late Queen Mother Zein Al Sharaf, who passed away four years ago after a dedicated life.

The late Queen Mother contributed a great deal to Jordan's social and humanitarian work. She led the efforts of Jordanian women to gain their rights, which the Jordanian constitution had guaranteed for them. The late Queen Mother contributed to the advancement of the status of Jordanian women and enabled them to take the lead in the various walks of life.

The late Queen Mother established the first Jordanian Women's Union in 1944, and the women's solidarity society, followed by the women's branch of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society in 1948.

Umm Al Hussein Orphanage, which the late Queen Mother established for orphaned children in Jordan, was but one of her many contributions toward ensuring a decent living for the poor and needy.



HRH Princess Basma on Saturday addresses the opening session of a six-day pan-Arab symposium on the role of voluntary societies in social development (Petra photo)

Princess Basma underlines need for government, NGO cooperation

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Basma on Saturday stressed that development cannot be achieved without the combined efforts of governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Addressing the opening session of a six-day pan-Arab symposium on the role of voluntary institutions in social development, Princess Basma underlined the important role NGOs can play in development, noting their contribution in addressing many human and development issues.

Princess Basma voiced hope that the symposium would succeed in formulating clearly defined principles for dealing with development issues in accordance with priorities reflecting the actual needs of communities.

Princess Basma emphasised the need to involve NGOs in discussing development needs and to utilise their experience in addressing such issues. She called for putting the necessary resources at the disposal of NGOs, which she said will be an active force in the next century.

The Princess called for utilising the expertise of others in enacting legislation to address development issues, noting that problems and difficulties facing different Arab communities are similar.

She voiced her appreciation to the Arab League and to HRH Prince Talal Ben Abdul Aziz for providing the opportunity to enable Arab ministers of social development and NGOs to meet periodically and discuss means of strengthening dialogue between the two sectors and enhance their role in serving Arab development objectives.

In his address to the opening session, Minister of Social Development Mohammad Kheir Mamser said NGOs have become the third economic and social power after the public and private sectors.

Dr. Mamser stressed that the traditional social and welfare programmes are no longer enough to address the economic problems and social changes which marginalised and less privileged groups face.

Reviewing challenges facing Arab social voluntary work, Dr. Mamser said the biggest challenges lie in rapid population growth coupled with the increasing number of the poor, the widening income gap, and the high cost of social programmes, which he said has doubled and sometimes trebled. The increasing number of the unemployed, particularly among the poor, the absence of a minimum wage policy, and the low turnout of volunteers to carry out social work have compounded these problems, he added.

The symposium was organised by the Ministry of Social Development in cooperation with the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs.

Regent, Lebanese central bank governor discuss bilateral economic ties

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan received at the Royal Court the governor of the Central Bank of Lebanon, Riyad Salameh, with whom he discussed means of bolstering bilateral economic ties.

During the meeting, which was attended by the governor of the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), Ziyad Fariz, and Lebanese Ambassador William Habib, the Crown Prince underlined the need for strengthening Arab cooperation in economic, financial and monetary fields, particularly at the current stage, to better serve the Arab World and improve the living conditions of Arab citizens.

For his part, Dr. Salameh briefed the Crown Prince on the latest financial and banking developments in Lebanon and praised the level of cooperation between the CBJ and the Central Bank of Lebanon.

In an earlier meeting with Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, Dr. Salameh reviewed issues of common concern to the two countries as well as the peace process and Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon.

Dr. Ensour told the Lebanese official that Jordan supports efforts to achieve a comprehensive peace and demands that U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 on southern Lebanon be implemented unconditionally.

In reviewing the economic situation in the Middle East, Dr. Salameh outlined the Central Bank of Lebanon's activities and plans to improve the Lebanese economy. He stated that Beirut is going ahead with plans to promote economic, financial and monetary cooperation with Arab countries.

The meeting was also attended by Ambassador Habib and Mr. Fariz.

Earlier Saturday, the Cabinet, meeting in a regular session chaired by Dr. Ensour, approved a \$78 million American grant to Jordan. A sum of \$60 million will be used for water projects, while the rest will finance a programme to create jobs.

In a statement after the meeting, the Cabinet said the grant is part of the \$225 million U.S. financial assistance to Jordan this year, of which \$75 million will be in the form of military aid.

The Cabinet announced that the government will exempt refugees whose cases are being processed by the Amman office of the U.N. Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) from paying value added taxes on air tickets. This decision applies to those refugees voluntarily leaving the country once UNHCR secures them a safe destination.

The Cabinet formed a delegation from the ministries of planning and water and irrigation to hold talks with the European Investment Bank in Luxembourg from April 28-May 1 to obtain a loan to help finance the replacement of the water network in the Amman region. The Ministry of Planning has already secured most of the estimated JD250 million required for the project.

Another delegation was formed to visit Kuwait early next month for negotiations with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development on a loan to purchase medical equipment for King Abdullah Hospital at the Jordan University of Science and Technology.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Talhouni appointed ambassador to France, Vatican

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued on Saturday appointing Adnan Talhouni as Jordan's ambassador plenipotentiary to France and non-resident ambassador to the Vatican.

Car accidents kill 10, injure 264 last week

AMMAN (Petra) — The Civil Defence Department (CDD) Saturday reported that 10 persons were killed in car accidents last week. The CDD said 264 were injured in these accidents.

NEPCO names acting general manager

AMMAN (Petra) — The board of the National Electricity Power Company (NEPCO) Saturday appointed Wadiah Nabulsi as acting general manager of the company as of April 25, following the resignation of former General Manager Mohammad Sa'id Arafah.

Kaabhneh, NATO delegation discuss cooperation

AMMAN (Petra) — The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Field Marshal Abdul Hafez Mirai Kaabhneh, Saturday received a NATO delegation. Field Marshal Kaabhneh and the delegation discussed issues of common concern and scopes of cooperation.

what's going on

SCANDINAVIAN FILM WEEK

* Icelandic film "Children of Nature" and Finnish film "Dog Thieves" (with subtitles in English) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. respectively.

* Norwegian film "Herman" and Swedish film "Sixteen / Dancing Feet" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Monday, April 27, at 4:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. respectively.

FILM

* "Cet obscur objet du désir" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, on Monday, April 27, at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by Ecuadorian artist Olmedo Quimbata at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman, until May 12.

* Paintings by Naji Al Sanjori at Hamurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until May 3.

* Works by Yassin Al Mohammadawi at the Orient Gallery, Shmeisani (Tel. 5681303/4), until May 7.

* Photographic exhibition entitled "A Tour in the Dead Sea" by Jausen and Savignac at the French Cultural Centre, until April 30.

* Paintings by Lebanese-American artist Etel Adnan entitled "Artist's Book of Art and Poetry" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until May 21. Also displaying works by Berlin-based Syrian artist Marwan Bashir entitled "A Suite of Heads," and works by contemporary Arab artists.

Jordanian-Spanish committee concludes discussions on promoting bilateral cooperation

AMMAN (Petra) — A joint Jordanian-Spanish committee Saturday wound up two days of discussions designed to promote mutual cooperation in cultural, educational, scientific and technical fields.

The head of the Jordanian side, Nabil Ammari, secretary general of the Ministry of Planning, and Luiz Espinoza, secretary general of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (SAIC), signed the minutes of their deliberations at the conclusion of the talks.

The minutes covered Spain's technical aid to Jordan between 1998 and 2000, which will amount to \$6.38 million, according to a statement. The two sides also approved a plan for cooperation in education and the exchange of scholarships and educational expertise through universities and research centres in the two countries, it added.

According to the minutes, the two countries agreed to cooperate in cultural domains, particularly in archaeology and museums, and underlined the need for Spanish specialists to continue restoration of the Umayyad castle at the Amman Citadel, the frescoes at Amra castle, and the historic Qaileh site in the Irbid governorate.

The two sides discussed cooperation in library work, radio and television, and national news agency affairs. They also agreed on Spanish support for Jordan's national library.

According to the statement, Spain will help modernise Jordanian institutions, especially the ministries of municipal and rural affairs, justice and transport and telecommunications.

Spain also expressed readiness to help Jordan in the health and agricultural fields, modernise the outpatient clinics at Mafraq Hospital and enlarge Karamah Hospital, as well as train Jordanian doctors and nurses in primary health care and preventive medicine and help non-governmental organisations operating in the Kingdom.

Fulbright commission reinstates employee dismissed last month

By Amy Henderson
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordanian-American Binational Fulbright Commission's board of directors reinstated over the weekend an employee dismissed last month for her "political activities" at the height of the standoff between the United States and Iraq over weapons inspections.

Aida Dabbas, a programme officer at the Commission, informed the Jordan Times yesterday that the commission board granted her a petition hearing last Monday — a request that had been denied for several weeks — and informed her on Thursday that she could return to her post. Ms. Dabbas said she had no further comment. Board members confirmed that she had been reinstated but declined to explain their decision.

A member of the board said the board had taken a decision not to comment publicly on an "internal personnel matter."

Fulbright scholars in Amman who protested the commission's decision said they had not yet been officially informed of the decision, and therefore also declined to comment. However, one said: "Whatever the outcome of this story, I think this opened an important debate about how much freedom Americans living abroad and people working for American institutions have."

A source close to Ms. Dabbas said that the decision "was very appropriate."

"I think this has set an example for people about free expression," she said. "I think the board realises that they were wrong, and Aida has shown people that if you believe your rights have been violated and you keep shouting loud and long enough, someone is going to listen."

The board's decision to dismiss Ms. Dabbas provoked a storm of protest in the local press from citizens in Jordan and the United States as well as some Fulbright scholars studying in Jordan, who said the decision smacked of "McCarthyism."

"The Fulbright's message is that one's political beliefs must be tempered when working in an American organisation," one grantee said at the time. "The ramifications of her dismissal will extend beyond this individual incident, and it disturbs me that the organisation that is funding me to carry out research and engage in some critical thinking is firing an employee for that very reason."

In a March 1 memorandum, the executive director of the Commission, Alain McNamara, criticised Ms. Dabbas for publicly denouncing U.S. and British foreign policy on Iraq and criticising U.N. sanctions on the country.

He quoted several "inflammatory" excerpts from messages transmitted in February by Ms. Dabbas on NETS, the local on-line service, to the "Ask the Government," "Her Majesty's" and "Ask the GID" conference sites: "...the message is that the U.S. does not really give a damn about our lives...;...we must voice our anger and disgust with the U.S. genocidal policies against Arab people...; and "...[U.S. and British] aggression is also directed towards Jordan and the people of Jordan."

Signs protesting military action posted in her car, parked daily outside the Commission's office in Shmeisani, had led some Fulbright grantees "to nervous confusion," wrote Mr. McNamara.

He also took exception to an on-line debate between Ms. Dabbas and Jordan Television Director Nasser Judeh over the government's mid-February ban on public demonstrations and the application of the 1956 martial law on public meetings. The debate, he wrote, "lacked judgement and consideration" since Mr. Judeh is the son-in-law of Crown Prince Hassan, the commission's Royal patron. He called the debate "disrespectful in tone and language."

He concluded his letter by saying that "...the welfare of the Commission and what you deem is the sanctity of your own determined beliefs are incompatible."

The Binational Fulbright Commission is part of the Fulbright Programme, the U.S. government's prestigious scholarship programme, which annually sends some 800 American students to more than 100 nations to pursue various studies and research activities. There are currently 11 Fulbright scholars in Jordan.

The programme was created by the U.S. Congress in 1946 following an initiative by Senator William Fulbright — a self-described political activist and dissenter — as a step toward global understanding and as an alternative to armed conflict. It is funded by an annual congressional appropriation.

Badia development programme seeking to improve bedouin life while retaining tradition

By Ahmad Khatib
Special to the Jordan Times

SAFAWI — Improving the lot of bedouins without uprooting them is at the heart of an ambitious joint British-Jordanian project to revive the badia, a region that covers more than 30 per cent of the Kingdom but hosts only a fraction of the population.

Mohammad Shahbaz, head of the Jordan Badia Research and Development Programme (JBRDP), said the pilot project is trying to link the badia's economy with that of other regions of Jordan through the ideal exploitation of its available resources. It is also trying to improve the day-to-day life of 15,318 bedouins living in Safawi and the neighbouring northeastern parts of Jordan by preserving their traditional style of living.

"The aim of our researchers is to develop the badia from all socio-economic and political angles because Jordan's future lies in it," Mr. Shahbaz told journalists during a weekend familiarisation tour.

"There is huge cooperation between the JBRDP and the local people, because they understand our goals," he added.

"In the past, governments tried to improve the situation of the bedouins through settling them in their areas and forcing them to change their type of life," he said. "This failed because it was wrong."

There are no exact figures on bedouins in Jordan, many of whom have been slowly integrated into urban life. However, many of them still live in Safawi and move across the nearby Jordanian-Saudi-Syrian-Iraqi frontiers in search of grazing land to feed herds of sheep. Jordan has over 2.5 million sheep, with 500,000 alone grazing in Safawi and its surroundings.

Sharifa Zein Bint Nasser, JBRDP financing manager, told reporters that the programme could achieve its goals through using proper technology, studying available resources to exploit them, improving and developing the skills of the local people and combating desertification.

The programme, set up in 1992 under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan and the Duke of Kent, operates under the aegis of Jordan's Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST) and Britain's Royal Geographic Society (RGS).

"We consider local people as our partners in the programme, so their role is no less important than ours," she said. "The most important thing is to strike a careful balance between the environment's resources and the local people."

She said a decision was taken in 1995 to involve locals in the scheme by involving one of them as a member of the JBRDP board of directors.

Sharifa Zein said women, an essential element of the bedouin community, also played a major role in the programme by taking care of charities in addition to the house.

"In the near future, there will be three seats for local people on the board of directors and one of them will be for a bedouin woman," she said.

"We need more participation from Jordanian women."

According to JBRDP statistics, the badia provides 24.36 per cent of Jordan's national development income; 60 per cent of fossil water resources, JD585 million revenue in mineral wealth, 90 per cent of grazing lands, 10 per cent of traditional energy production, and 70 per cent of total red meat production.

Salem Aoun, head of the JBRDP technical department, said the badia's central location between Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia could enable the programme to help nearby countries.

"Although the average of rain there does not go over 200mm a year, the badia lands are full of needed energies and wealth vital for the development process," he added. "The badia forms a vital and strategic area for Jordan."

Sheikh Rakad Shbeib, a local dignitary, said he managed to improve the situation of his cattle and cultivation on his 1,600-dunum farm with help from JBRDP researchers.

He said he managed to plant around 45,000 trees, including many kinds of vegetables and fruit trees through using modern techniques.

"We have exchanged much knowledge with the JBRDP," Sheikh Rakad told reporters during a visit to his farm.

In another project, the JBRDP has managed to produce honey from the nectar of wild flowering plants.

"It's very rich in medicinal compounds, flavoured oils, nutritional substances and trace elements," said Mr. Shahbaz. "It's free of any contamination, because the badia has no polluting effect of human activities."

The JBRDP covers over 11,000 kilometres in area, including around 30 villages in Jordan's northeast. Its field centre is located in Safawi, 156 kilometres northeast of Amman.



An area of the badia that has been planted with grain under the JBRDP (Photo by Youssef 'Allan)

Calm settles in Bosnia town after Croat riot

teenager fatally
teacher, wounded

Teenager fatally wounded

Teenager fatally wounded

World News



Spanish Socialist leader Jose Borrell gestures during his speech after winning his party's first primary vote. Political maverick Borrell won an upset victory to become the opposition Socialist's candidate for prime minister in Spain's next general election (Reuters photo)

New Spanish Socialist leader brings change of generations

MADRID (R) — When former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez resigned as Socialist Party chief last June, Jose Borrell was quick to declare: "Papa's gone. It's time for us to grow up."

The 51-year-old political maverick has now claimed his place as leader of a new generation of Spanish Socialists by winning the party's first-ever primary and becoming its candidate for prime minister in the next general election.

His victory Friday was seen as a defeat not only for his rival party Secretary-General Joaquin Almunia, but also for Mr. Gonzalez and other top Socialists who had publicly backed Mr. Almunia.

But Mr. Borrell took a page out of Mr. Gonzalez's own book of political strategy.

It was Mr. Gonzalez who pushed aside the Socialist old guard in 1974 and took over the party at a time when it was still banned under dictator General Francisco Franco.

Mr. Gonzalez steered the party away from the radical left and adopted a more moderate strategy that helped it win the 1982 election and remain in power for the next 14

years.

"We have to elicit the enthusiasm that Felipe Gonzalez brought about in 1982," Mr. Borrell, who has depicted himself as a political outsider, said earlier this month. "We need a second change."

But unlike Mr. Gonzalez's overhaul of the party in the 1970s, Mr. Borrell's victory is seen as reflecting more style than policy.

The son of a baker from eastern Catalonia, Mr. Borrell, like Mr. Almunia, stands for Mr. Gonzalez's humane brand of moderate Socialism against the conservative Popular Party government's market-oriented approach.

Both argue for stronger measures to combat unemployment and achieve sustainable economic development.

But Mr. Borrell is seen as the idealist, driven to push through his policies regardless of the consequences, while Mr. Almunia has the image of the consummate politician always willing to negotiate behind closed doors.

The rhetoric of Mr. Borrell, a U.S.- and Paris-educated aeronautics engineer and economist, is tinged with the fire of the

true believer, as well as the skills of the orator.

Mr. Borrell, who assumed his first Socialist government post as head of the budget at the tax ministry in 1982, lashed out last week at a proposed income tax reform, accusing the government of pursuing Reaganite and Thatcherite policies.

His strongly argued convictions have brought barbs from the television show Puppets News, which calls him "Know-it-all" and "Super-Pepe."

Mr. Borrell's biggest challenge will be to convince Spanish voters the Socialists have mended their ways following a series of corruption and security scandals which contributed to Mr. Gonzalez's narrow election defeat two years ago.

The new leader brings to the task extensive experience in the trenches of Spanish politics.

As tax secretary from 1984, he led a tough campaign against tax fraud in defence of the public sector that earned him the enmity of the movers and shakers in the banking industry.

From 1991 to 1996, Mr. Borrell was public works minister, where he built up the Spanish road network.

Former PM says ready to replace Yeltsin in 2000

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's former Prime Minister and presidential hopeful Viktor Chernomyrdin said Saturday he felt ready to succeed Boris Yeltsin in the year 2000 and said he still admired the president despite being sacked last month.

"I am ready for the presidency and regard the post not as sitting on a throne but as very tough work," Mr. Chernomyrdin told a Congress of his centrist Our Home is Russia party.

Mr. Chernomyrdin, 60, served as prime minister for more than five years until Mr. Yeltsin suddenly dropped him on March 23 and asked the little-known Sergei Kiriyenko to form a new cabinet. Mr. Kiriyenko was approved in the post by parliament Friday.

Mr. Chernomyrdin, a former gas industry boss, reiterated his party's support for 35-year-old Kiriyenko but said it would not hesitate to

criticise the new cabinet if it made mistakes.

Friday Vladimir Ryzhkov, a deputy speaker of the state Duma lower house of parliament from Mr. Chernomyrdin's party, said he expected several Our Home is Russia members to join Mr. Kiriyenko's government.

Mr. Chernomyrdin urged his party to back his bid for the presidency. The next election is due in July 2000 and Mr. Yeltsin, 67, has said he will not seek another four-year term.

Mr. Yeltsin has given only lukewarm backing to Mr. Chernomyrdin since the former premier announced his decision to contest the presidency.

Last month he said he had sacked Mr. Chernomyrdin to free him up to prepare for the presidential race. Mr. Yeltsin has been critical of the outgoing government's failure to tackle chronic wage and

pension arrears suffered by millions of Russians.

But in a message to Saturday's our home Congress, Mr. Yeltsin praised the party's commitment to market reforms and democracy.

"Your organisation has established itself as an influential and authoritative political force ... you consistently take the course of reforms," Mr. Yeltsin's message said.

Mr. Chernomyrdin said he felt no grudge against his former boss.

"I have always respected and still respect Boris Yeltsin both as president and as a man," he told congress deputies.

Despite having a solid party base and strong ties with Russia's business elite, the dull and unexciting Chernomyrdin is expected to face an uphill struggle to persuade Russian voters that he is the best man to succeed Mr. Yeltsin.

Teenager fatally shoots teacher, wounds two students

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A 14-year-old boy shot and killed a teacher, and wounded two students while at a dance in a Pennsylvania town late Friday, CNN reported.

Police said the boy

bolted immediately after firing the shots, but was chased down by the dance hall owner and disarmed, according to Cable News Network.

The teen, whose name was not released, was

identified as an eighth-grade student at the J.W. Parker Middle School in northwest Pennsylvania.

He is currently in custody and will face murder charges, CNN reported.

Afghan peace talks in Pakistan fixed for Sunday after brief upset

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Afghan peace talks under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference have been rescheduled for Sunday after failing to start Saturday, Pakistani and U.N. officials said.

The first session of a joint steering committee made up of delegates from the Afghan Taliban militia and a rival northern alliance will begin Sunday around 10:00 a.m. (0500 GMT), a Pakistani foreign office spokesman said.

A tentative agenda for the first face-to-face meeting between the two Afghan sides has been drawn up by their coordinators, who have been meeting here since April 20, the spokesman told reporters.

A Taliban delegation — which did not arrive here Friday leading to the readjustment of the schedule by

the coordinators — flew into Islamabad late Saturday.

The spokesman did not disclose the contents of the tentative agenda, but said the "primary" task of the steering committee was to prepare the ground for a meeting of ulama or religious scholars from both camps.

Afghan sources said the talks would also cover a permanent ceasefire and an exchange of prisoners.

The Taliban Islamic militia, which controls two-thirds of Afghanistan, wants an authoritative ulama commission to find a solution to the conflict in accordance with the principles of Islamic Sharia law.

The opposition alliance holds the northern part of the country. It includes the ousted government of former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, his military strongman Ahmad Shah

Masood, ethnic Uzbek leader General Abdul Rashid Dostam and the Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat faction.

The intra-Afghan meeting will start at the Punjab House, a state guest house, with a ceremonial sitting open to the press, which will be followed by a working session.

U.N. and OIC representatives will participate in the work of the steering committee, the spokesman said.

He said Pakistan had worked hard to bring the Afghan sides together and it "remains optimistic."

"We have invested a lot of effort. We have urged them (Afghan parties) and pleaded with them to come to the negotiating table and move towards peace and a broad-based government," he said.

Islamabad has kept Afghanistan's neighbouring countries "fully briefed," the spokesman said, adding

that and Saudi Arabia had been "continually" visited by a Pakistani envoy.

The United States and Iranian governments have sent "messages of support and good wishes," the spokesman said.

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Bill Richardson, who disclosed the talks agreement on April 17 after visiting Afghanistan, has conveyed his "best wishes to all the participants" and his "gratitude" to Pakistan and its Premier Nawaz Sharif, the spokesman said.

Neither U.N. nor Pakistani officials explained why the Taliban team could not arrive Friday, but Afghan sources said the Islamic militia had "reservations" about issues the opposition wanted to raise.

A nine-member delegation of the multi-faction Afghan northern alliance, who arrived in Pakistan

Thursday for the talks, have said they would like to discuss political issues, besides a ceasefire and prisoners exchange.

The opposition's intention to bring up the issue of a power-sharing deal apparently upset the Taliban, sources said.

Thousands of Afghans have died in factional fighting since 1992 after the fall of Communist rule in Kabul. Earlier more than a million Afghans were killed during Muslim resistance against the 1979-89 Soviet military occupation.

The agreement on a truce and on the talks was made possible after strenuous spadework by Pakistan and U.N. special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi.

OIC Assistant Secretary General, Ibrahim Saleh Bakar, who is here to assist the talks, has said the Muslim World expected a positive outcome.

Indonesian police fire rubber bullets at students as protests continue

JAKARTA (AFP) — Tens of thousands of students across Indonesia have staged anti-government protests in recent days, with police using rubber-coated bullets and tear gas against petrol bombs in one clash, reports said Saturday.

Witnesses and press reports said police fired rubber bullets at students at two universities in the western city of Medan both Thursday and Friday to stop them demonstrating in the streets.

The Jakarta Post daily and the witness said that in a clash Friday about 1,000 students at the St. Thomas Catholic University in

Medan threw petrol bombs at police, who responded with rubber bullets and tear gas.

The witness said police used dozens of canisters of tear gas. Another witness said at least four people were injured and one student had to be rushed to hospital after becoming unconscious from the gas.

"This was the most violent demonstration here in the last few months," a student named as Katarina was quoted as saying by the Jakarta Post.

The students also set fire to tyres in Medan, the capital of North Sumatra province, Antara state news agency

reported.

The first witness said Friday's battles stemmed from growing tensions after a clash Thursday, when police used rubber bullets to stop students from the Medan Technological Institute (ITM) demonstrating in the street.

Thursday the ITM students tried to rally to the streets but could not because the police would not allow them," he said, adding that the police later fired rubber bullets again to hold them back.

The second witness said hundreds of students continued protests in Medan

Saturday at the North Sumatra University, North Sumatra Islamic University and the Islamic North Sumatra Muhammadiyah University.

The witness said Saturday's protests had so far passed without incident.

Tens of thousands of students across Indonesia staged rallies Friday demanding sweeping reforms amid the country's worst economic crisis, the Jakarta Post reported.

It said protests were also held Friday in Jakarta at the private National University, in the South Sulawesi provincial capital of

Ujungpandang at the state Hasanuddin University, and in the North Sulawesi provincial capital of Manado at the Sam Ratulangi University.

It said other rallies were held at various universities in the East Java provincial capital of Surabaya, in the central Java town of Yogyakarta at the Gadjah Mada University and in the West Java provincial capital of Bandung at the Bandung Institute of Technology.

A wave of student protests began at the end of February. Authorities have largely tolerated them provided they remain on campus.

Trouble hits U.S. space shuttle

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (R) — A cabin air scrubber aboard the space shuttle Columbia failed late Friday, forcing the astronauts to switch to a backup system, mission control said.

The life support system, which absorbs carbon dioxide exhaled by the astronauts, shut down about 11:30 p.m. EDT (0330 GMT) as the crew was getting ready to go to bed, mission control commentator James Hartsfield said.

"There's no immediate problem in the cabin atmosphere," he said "it's certainly no safety issue."

Columbia's crew was instructed by mission control to install backup chemical canisters to remove carbon dioxide from the air overnight.

Mr. Hartsfield said there were "sufficient" canisters aboard and there had not been any dangerous buildup of carbon dioxide. He did not say if there were enough chemicals to last until the end of the shuttle's planned 16-17 day mission.

When the carbon dioxide removal system first shut down, mission control suspected the problem was with its electronic controller. But when the astronauts switched to a second set of electronics, the system shut down again after 10 minutes.

Astronaut Kay Hire reported hearing a strange noise about the time the device failed.

"It was a noise I did not recognise," she said.

Mission control suggested the sound was caused by the device's compressor and was probably normal, but Hire insisted she had not heard it before.

The astronauts, who were already running about two hours behind schedule when the problem cropped up were told to go to bed and get up an hour later than planned to catch up on lost sleep, Hartsfield said.

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Ban institutionalised torture

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL Secretary General Pierre Sané summed up quite clearly the position of the international community on the practice of torture when he visited Israel recently. He told Israeli officials then that "torture is wrong whatever the circumstances even in the name of security or in the name of peace."

Israel prides itself as a model democracy and an oasis of freedom, rule of law and respect for human rights. Yet its highest court had upheld not too long ago the right of Israeli security forces to use "physical pressure" when interrogating Arabs suspected of breaching the country's security. And by Israeli standards as condoned by the judicial system, shaking prisoners in a violent way is not torture. Deprivation of sleep is not torture. Holding Arab detainees incommunicado and under prolonged detention without a charge is all right. Yet all such measures and methods of interrogation are taboo when it comes to Israelis suspected of committing the most violent and abhorrent crimes.

The International Convention Against Torture prohibits torture in no uncertain terms and whatever are the reasons, the Israelis should know by now. And there are no ifs and buts about this prohibition as far as Israel or any other country is concerned.

Granted that the Jewish state has, though reluctantly and belatedly, acceded to several basic human rights instruments. But the fact that its government has finally signalled its willingness to conduct its affairs on the basis of international standards make it incumbent first on the state to amend its laws and secondly on the Israeli judiciary to make the proper rulings on all human rights issues in a manner consistent with international norms.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Sultan Hattab said the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel marks also the 50th anniversary of the usurpation of Palestinian lands and the start of the sufferings of the Palestinian people. The writer said Benjamin Netanyahu, who went to Europe to visit sites of Jewish suffering under the Nazis should remember that the creation of the state of Israel was at the expense of the Palestinian people's rights, and the world should realise that the Palestinians have been facing their own Holocaust at the hands of what Hattab called neo Nazis in Palestine. The creation of Israel 50 years ago triggered the beginning of the erasing from the map of 485 Palestinian villages and towns to be replaced by Israeli settlements, noted the writer. He said if the Nazis committed massacres against the Jews of Europe, the Israelis have been carrying out systematic annihilation of the Palestinian nation since 1948. The writer said it is sad to see the world concerned about the security of Israel which is occupying Palestinian lands but no steps are taken to render justice to the oppressed people of Palestine who do not enjoy security and basic rights.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Riyad Hroub reflected on the Rabia and Shmeisani crimes saying that their repercussions are still reverberating around the Kingdom. Only when the concerned security services have solved the mystery shrouding these organised crimes can the Jordanian people feel safe, said the writer. Millions of dinars are being spent on purchasing equipment and modern laboratories, but the concerned departments remain incapable of dealing with crimes of such proportions unless police cadres have received adequate training in pursuing the right course of investigations and search for criminals, said the writer. We have to admit that the police force in Jordan lacks the proficiency despite their strenuous efforts to deal with crime, and therefore the concerned authorities should arrange for police officers of high calibre to acquire advanced training courses in tracking down criminals, said the writer who also suggested that police officers and not members of the public be offered financial rewards as incentives to double their efforts in solving criminal cases.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Extremists take a look at privatisation

By Dr. Fahed Fanek

EXTREMISTS FROM both sides of the political spectrum would like to confront us with one of two options: Jordan should either liquidate the public sector completely or it should back-down, and renounce the idea of privatisation. They get busy calculating benefits of one option and costs of the other that may result from going in this direction or that.

To my knowledge there is no one in Jordan who called for the immediate and complete abolishment of the public sector and consequently the withdrawal of the government from all projects including education, health care, airports, sea ports, mines and other natural resources. On the other hand I never ran into somebody who looks at privatisation as a taboo and reject it in absolute terms including the involvement of the government in hotels, newspapers, light industries and services.

What we have is a search for priorities. We are trying to deal with privatisation not as a sweeping concept but on a case-by-case basis. There should be no attempt to come up with a rigid formula that must be applied across the board irrespective of the results and obstacles, be they social, political, financial, or managerial.

There are of course some enterprises owned by the government and managed by its bureaucrats which created a financial and administrative burden on its back. It is much better for the government to withdraw and

allow businessmen of the private sector to take-over certain projects because they are more qualified to provide a better service at a lower cost and rid the government of the headache and the losses.

Still, there are some strategic resources which should remain in public hands, at least it is too premature to privatise or to place in the control of foreign hands.

In the camp of the extreme left which believes in the absolute domination of the state and its public sector, as well as in the extreme right camp which calls for leaving everything to those who own the capital, we hear false arguments that are tossed about to scare the public.

Take for instance the claim that Jordan's indebtedness may rise by hundreds of millions of dollars unless the government finds a strategic partner to take the burden and rid the treasury of borrowing to finance urgent expansion and modernisation programmes of the communications sector. Ditto for electric power generation etc.

As a matter of fact, privatisation in itself will not alter the amount of capital needed for expansion and modernisation. The strategic partner will not provide financing. The strategic partner will make the telecommunications corporation borrow the funds. The debt of all projects constitute part of Jordan's external indebtedness whether the borrower is a private or public enterprise. Future debt service in both cases is a burden on Jordan's

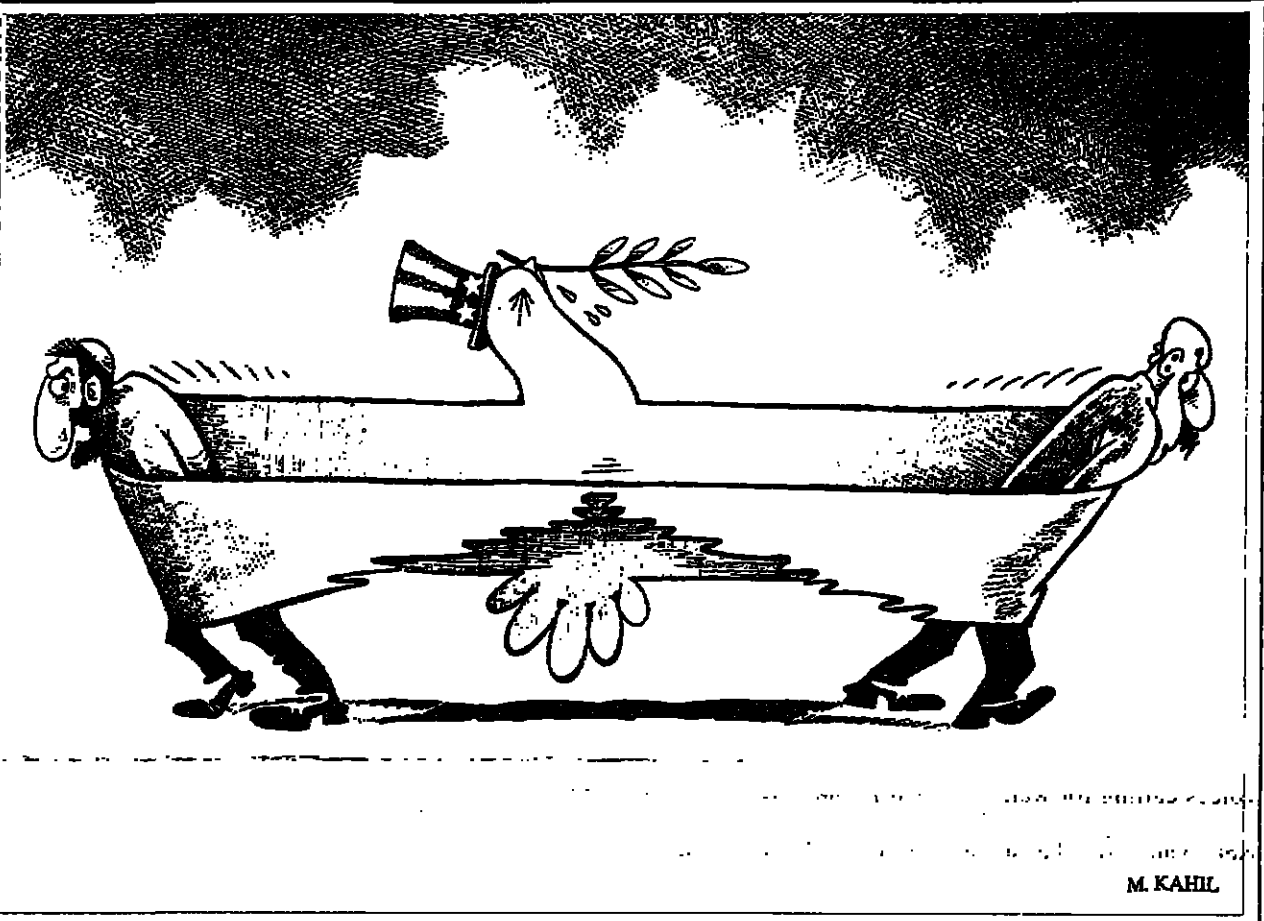
future balance of payments and its resources of foreign exchange. The strategic partner will make the debt commitment in his capacity as manager not in his personal capacity. Even if a guarantee is needed, he will not guarantee the share of the government: 60 per cent in the case of the telecommunications corporation.

In fact the government will remain the implicit if not explicit guarantor of the debt because it will not allow a vital enterprise such as the Telecommunications Corporation to go bankrupt and be liquidated in case of its failure to meet its debt obligations.

We understand privatisation as a mechanism to improve efficiency, and competitiveness, but it has nothing to do with financing which will remain a Jordanian liability, whether it is carried in the books of a public or private sector enterprise.

So far the government failed to provide evidence of the desirability of introducing a strategic sector, especially when technology is available in the market, and we can't escape borrowing. On the contrary: Having a strategic partner will limit our freedom to choose the best technology in the market because we have to buy it only from one source at any price.

The strategic partner will not provide the technology free of charge, will not borrow money in its own name, and may sacrifice the country's interests in view of his global network interests.



Who best to push the peace process forward?

By George S. Hishmeh

WASHINGTON — The historic Northern Ireland peace agreement announced earlier this month heralding peace in that strife-torn region for the first time in 30 years has naturally attracted wider attention from those dealing with its other famously intractable counterpart — the derailed Middle East peace process.

How will the Irish settlement influence thinking on those searching for an Arab-Israeli settlement has been the fodder for many a Mideast trouble-shooter and watcher.

For a start, there has been wide speculation here that the success of former U.S. Senator George Mitchell in mediating the conflict in Ulster could cut short the mediation of Dennis Ross, the U.S. Mideast peace coordinator, who has not had much luck lately with his mission but is currently in the region for yet another attempt at reviving the stalled negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis.

The replacement of Ross would undoubtedly please many an Arab leader, especially the Palestinians, who have often voiced their distrust of the American-Jewish mediator.

Although many Arab-American leaders and others would like to see Mitchell take a crack at Mideast negotiating, there is not that unflinching support among the leadership of the Arab-American community for the former senator, who was born to a Lebanese mother and Irish father but was adopted by an Irish-American family at a young age. Mitchell, who was the Senate Majority Leader, one of the highest positions in the U.S. government, lacks any public record of sympathetic support for an honourable Middle East settlement or any noteworthy position for a new Lebanon. He was at one point considered by President Clinton for the position of secretary of state.

With the Middle East peace process deadlocked for more than a year, Ross has reportedly been encountering problems with his colleagues at the State Department. Unlike Ross, Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk, a one-time ambassador to Israel and who is also Jewish, is said to be advocating a tougher line against the right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu. There also have been recent reports that even Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright is now questioning some of the judgements of her long-serving mediator, and relying more on Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering, a former ambas-

sador to Israel and Jordan, and the third-ranking State Department official. Hence, the State Department announcement April 20 that Indyk will be accompanying Ross on the trip has raised many an eyebrow on the reason behind this joint assignment for the two top aides on Middle East affairs who are known to differ on the necessary steps for reviving the process. This was all the more surprising since it comes days before Secretary Albright will be seeing Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in London early next month.

A decision to replace Ross will need

Although many Arab-American leaders and others would like to see [George] Mitchell take a crack at Mideast negotiating, there is not that unflinching support among the leadership of the Arab-American community for the former senator. . .

the support of President Clinton because Ross holds the rank of ambassador but remains answerable to Albright. Interestingly, Ross unlike all other American ambassadors in the Middle East, does not report to Indyk, probably one factor contributing to their differences.

Robert Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, whose first top executive was Indyk, argued in a weekend article that "the two conflicts are fundamentally different, and the solutions reached at Stormont last week and in Oslo in 1993 are very different, too."

However, after agreeing with a comment by President Clinton that "the lesson of Stormont for the Mideast is just don't ever stop," Satloff reminded the American president that "an equally important lesson is don't ever try to dictate terms of an agreement." Although the American ideas for a solution to the conflict in Northern Ireland were voiced publicly by

Mitchell, Satloff nevertheless said: "As history has shown, American engagement in Mideast diplomacy is necessary for its success, but not sufficient. In the Mideast case, Israelis and Palestinians don't need a distinguished ex-senator such as George Mitchell to help them achieve their own Stormont; they already made their own deal, without direct U.S. assistance, at Oslo."

On the other hand, Richard H. Curtiss, a former senior foreign service officer who was speaking April 19 at Georgetown University on the occasion of "fifty years of Palestinian dispossession," advocated a return to "traditional American support for human rights, self-determination and fair play" in the Middle East.

Curtiss recalled a 1996 Washington Post news article "gloating... how the making of U.S. Middle East policies had been wrestled away from the so-called 'Arabists' — meaning career foreign service officers who had served in the area, could read and speak its languages, and understood and respected its religions and culture."

He said the Washington Post had noted at the time that "U.S. Middle East policy was now solely in the hands of Jewish political appointees who had lived in Israel and spoke Hebrew" and identified these as Indyk, Ross and Aaron David Miller, the deputy Mideast peace coordinator.

"Since the article celebrating the final defeat of the Arabists was published," Curtiss told the conference, Netanyahu "has felt safe in renouncing the Oslo accords... without fear of U.S. retaliation, thus ending the Middle East peace process."

Underlining the growing unpopularity and insecurity that Americans sometimes feel in the region, Curtiss blamed these on such decisions as the recent vote at the United Nations when the U.S. and Micronesia were the only two member states to vote against a resolution "calling upon Israel to curb further encroachments on Palestinian lands by Jewish settlers." Curtiss stressed: "Our Israel-centered Middle East policies are leading our country to disaster, and possibly even to war."

He insisted that "domestic political interests should not dictate U.S. foreign policy (and) only when the American people take back the control of American policy from the special interests which are so distorting it today, will Americans again be safe anywhere in the world."

Netanyahu flies high, but it better not go to his head

By Thomas L. Friedman

WASHINGTON — Clinton administration officials insist that this time, for sure, no kidding, absolutely, positively, the Mideast peace process is entering its endgame.

Either Yasser Arafat and Benjamin Netanyahu say "yes" to the U.S. compromise plan for tying up all the outstanding issues before final-status negotiations, or else.

The "or else" is that the Clintonites will make their compromise proposals public and then let the parties fend for themselves.

And since it is Mr. Netanyahu who has been resisting the U.S. plan — for a roughly 13 per cent phased Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank in return for phased Palestinian fulfilment of security and political commitments — the threat is directed primarily at him.

Alas, Mr. Netanyahu does not seem to be quaking in his boots. Give him his due. For all his fumbling, he understands power. He can smell weakness. And for now he clearly detects an imbalance of power in his favour, which is why he keeps calling the Clinton team's bluff.

He detects that the U.S. defeat of the Soviet Union and Iraq has left the Arab states with no military option. They can bluff and puff, but none of them will bring any military weight to bear on behalf of the Palestinians. Both the Arab and the Palestinian middle classes have, for the moment, opted out of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

He detects that with gasoline at \$1 a gallon (26 cents a litre) in the United States and American oil companies diversified outside the Middle East, the Arab oil lobby in Washington today is dead. So now when the Israel lobby calls senators, like Connie Mack and Joe Lieberman, and tells them to jump, the only question they ask is: How high?

Senators Mack and Lieberman sponsored a Senate letter effectively demanding that Bill Clinton abandon America's balanced mediator role in Arab-Israel negotiations — which produced the 1973 disengagement accords, Camp David and the Madrid breakthrough — and instead use America's weight to pressure Mr. Arafat to accept whatever Mr. Netanyahu offers.

Mr. Netanyahu detects that Mr. Clinton and Al Gore have no stomach for any politically explosive showdown with him. He detects that the presi-

dent's national security adviser, Sandy Berger, is more willing to bring domestic political calculations into U.S. foreign policy than any previous NSC adviser.

And he detects that Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, although she got off to an excellent start in the Middle East, has lost her nerve — partly because she is always uncertain of how much Mr. Clinton will back her and partly because she has yet to articulate a coherent framework for U.S. foreign policy and the national interest, and therefore she has been unable to extract Arab-Israeli diplomacy from domestic U.S. politics.

The question is: What will Mr. Netanyahu do with this imbalance of power? He seems to think he has two options.

Option one is to use his leverage to cut a good deal, a better deal than the Labour Party ever could have got, a deal that whittles the Palestinian demands (for this second-phase withdrawal) down from 20 to 30 per cent of the West Bank to 11 or 12 per cent — but a deal that still leaves the Palestinians with enough gains to want to continue Oslo and cooperate with Israel on security. This option would cost him some support within his own rightist coalition, but would make him a hero nationally.

Option two is to assume that he can use the imbalance of power to cram whatever he wants down the Palestinians' throats — such as less than full sovereignty over less than half the West Bank. And if the Palestinians won't accept that, so this option assumes, he can live with the stalemate at no cost, because the United States will not punish him because the Arabs will never get their act together, and because Israel's Labour Party is too weak to mount any domestic challenge.

But there is a third option, one that Mr. Netanyahu may not see. It is option two with a different ending — one in which everyone doesn't just bow to this imbalance of power.

In this option, the U.S.-Israeli relationship slowly erodes; the Arab cold war against Israel re-emerges; Israel gets re-ghettoised in the region and eventually exposed to a hot war with unconventional weapons; and the Palestinian middle class gets re-radicalised and starts killing again — first its own leaders and then Israelis.

Beware of option three.

— The New York Times

JTV launch

Continued from page 1

Arabic and English. The new channel will have a separate identity from the first and second channels. It will offer different issues that will help complement the main channels.

Mr. Juch said the new channel will be launched on Sunday, April 27, at 10 p.m. It will be the first of a four-day celebration that will start on April 27. It will be the first of a four-day celebration that will start on April 27. It will be the first of a four-day celebration that will start on April 27.

The Royal Crown, a symbol of the monarchy, is embedded in an eye-like logo, with the figure of a man in the center of the eye against a blue background.

Coming up with this logo has taken a lot of time and effort," he said, adding that JTV had been adding in local dailies to help develop the new image. However, JTV staff provided the final product.

He benefited from suggestions which we used to develop our own ideas and perspectives," Mr. Juch said.

The logo will have several versions that will be used to mark programme commissions, including a

new programme with a variety of live coverage, a programme, productions work

A contest

Feature King ur to revive

(Continued from page 1)

as he has promised, we will support him in this. We see ourselves in a critical time — a time when we can contribute to build on our own achievements, particularly regarding the situation in Israel and Palestine. He said before receiving the German Media award for outstanding international figures.

"We cannot afford to lose time and we cannot miss the opportunity to move forward," King Hussein said.

Other winners of the prize, an award conferred by leading newspapers and magazines, included Russian President Boris Yeltsin, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the late French President Francois Mitterrand.

President Hattab, who handed His Majesty the media prize, hailed the King's efforts to keep the peace process alive, saying the prize was a recognition of his life's work in trying to bring about reconciliation in the Middle East.

"This prize is a recognition of your intrinsic qualities, for visionary strength, for pragmatism, for readiness to compromise — last but not least — for the ability to communicate," he told the King.

The monarch said dialogue and understanding were the way forward for such a mission. "How can we sort out our problems if we never see ourselves in the place of those with whom we are problems?" he asked.

Question: Like this, he asked, were on the mind of the people of the Middle East — Jordanians, Palestinians, Israelis and Arabs. Hence, he said, the present opportunity for peace should be seized in order to secure a better future and attain a lasting peace on all Arab-Israeli issues.

He also called on all sides to continue the struggle against terrorism, saying those who resort to violence were

Features/News

Jordan Times, Sunday, April 26, 1998

7

King urges Netanyahu to revive peace process

(Continued from page 1)

as he has promised, and we will support him in this," he said in an impromptu speech.

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The Monarch said dialogue and understanding were the way to forward such a mission.

"How can we sort out our problems if we never put ourselves in the place of those with whom we have 'problems?' he asked.

Questions like this, he added, were on the mind of the people of the Middle East: Jordanians, Palestinians, Israelis and Arabs. Hence, he said, the present opportunity for peace should be seized in order to secure a better future and attain a lasting peace on all Arab-Israeli fronts.

He also called on all parties to continue the struggle against terrorism, saying those who revert to violence were

the enemies of peace.

He also praised Mr. Peres, describing him as an old friend committed to the cause of peace.

In return, Mr. Peres told reporters: "I think if there is a man who deserves (the award), it is His Majesty King Hussein."

"His Majesty is a builder of peace, a maker of peace and a maintainer of peace," Mr. Peres said. "He has shown enough courage to propose the structure of peace, enough will to make it a policy and enough wisdom to maintain it despite all the difficulties."

King Hussein thanked Her Majesty Queen Noor for the continued help and support she provides him in difficult times and said she has been his partner in building the nation.

His Majesty later met with Mr. Arafat and Mr. Peres and discussed with both leaders issues blocking the peace process and the three men stressed the need to forge ahead to reach a final settlement.

Their meeting precedes the May 4 Middle East peace meeting in London, what could probably be the last chance to achieve a breakthrough.

"We are at a very critical stage," the Monarch told reporters after the talks. "I believe that in the coming short period, matters will hopefully either take the right course or those responsible for obstructing the peace process will have to take responsibility for their own actions."

The three leaders also praised the American efforts to move peace making, especially recent U.S. proposals on a further Israeli troop redeployment from areas of the West Bank.

"We are referring to the U.S. as a partner in the peace process," His Majesty said. "Rejecting the involvement of this partner is an insensible thing."

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is expected to meet separately with Mr. Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu in London at the end of her Asian tour to try and break the impasse amid rising scepticism.

ticism.

However, responding to a question on the meeting, the King said that Washington was committed to playing an active and influential role in the negotiations.

"The role of peacemakers is to get together and work hand-in-hand to defend the rights of the coming generations to enable them to live in a comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East," he said.

Mr. Arafat told the Jordan Times before his departure from Germany on Saturday that his meeting with the King and Mr. Peres looked into means to salvage the peace process.

"We discussed ways of rescuing the process, especially with the stubborn and irresponsible policies of Mr. Netanyahu that are aimed at destroying the process," Mr. Arafat said.

He also reiterated the Palestinian's commitment to all redeployment agreements signed with the Israelis.

Mr. Peres expressed his dismay over the shackled peace process saying: "It is very difficult, but I don't think it is lost and I don't think it is dead."

He told reporters that "every great historic movement has its setbacks and disappointments and failures, but there is no alternative, and despite all the difficulties I don't hear any voices calling for war."

He urged Mr. Netanyahu to take some risks saying Israeli premier was too worried with his own coalition government that has shown division over the course of peace.

"You can't have peace without risks, otherwise you will have the risk of war," Mr. Peres said. "And it is better to have the risk of peace than the risk of war," he stressed. "I think we shouldn't lose our hearts now, we must go ahead."

The most hated man in Britain has a good point about sanctions

By Andrew Marr

IT'S A JOB one Labour MP always has to have: "The most odious man in Britain" is a semi-formal honorific held in the past by Tony Benn (MOMB, retired, now much-loved grand fatherly diarist), Dennis Skinner (now revered parliamentary relic and almost-loyalist) and Ken Livingstone who, although still a threat as a London mayoral candidate, is officially less odious now that talking to Sinn Fein is done in the best circles.

So, who next? The new candidate-MOMB is George Galloway, a moustachio'd Scottish MP who may need some introduction south of the border. "Gorgeous George" is the man whose hand-shaking meeting with Saddam Hussein and whose recent ushering into Britain of a 4-year-old Iraqi girl for cancer treatment infuriated the foreign policy establishment.

But he has form. He is almost a professional infuriator. He is hated by different ministers for an impressive variety of reasons. He was snubbed by Gordon Brown after passing a copy of Paul Routledge's biography of the Chancellor to a journalist. At the Scottish Office, they regard him as a quasi-nationalist and a sub-revolutionary posur.

Going further back, his fiercely pro-Palestinian line at Dundee city chambers, which flew the PLO flag as it failed to attract investment, was seen as terrible advertising for that struggling town. His career at War on Want, including a sex scandal in Greece was, to put it mildly, controversial. He is not, in short, a sound fellow. He is a leftist romantic, the sort for "friendship societies" and international solidarity committees and perhaps the last man in public life who can use the word "cadre" without embarrassment. But then, our political history is littered with radicals who were mostly disliked, and often daft, but who nevertheless pointed out uncomfortable truths that the respectable, grown-up world blithely refused to confront.

It seems to me that on Iraq, Galloway follows squarely in the same tradition. As Rupert Cornwell argued recently, he is broadly right about the futility of sanctions. But since that article, Galloway has been further vilified on this subject and this weekend was the target of a News of the World sex "expose" about which he is suing. Given that the government is hosting a conference in London just now on the vexed



Scottish MP George Galloway visits four-year-old Mariam Hamzeh in hospital (Reuters photo)

question of the Iraqi oil-for-food deal and Galloway is its main tormentor on the issue, the story was at the very least happily timed for the powers that be.

The London conference, in fact further evidence of the oddity, even the madness, of our current position. Let's recap. At the time of the Gulf war, we could easily have destroyed Saddam Hussein's army and driven him from power. Given that he is regularly compared in the West to Hitler, historians will wonder why we didn't, whatever the U.N. position. Instead, we imposed sanctions. But sanctions don't bring down regimes, whether in South Africa, Libya or Iran (Cornwell, op. cit.). Saddam seems, if anything, stronger than he was before the invasion of

Kuwait. Sanctions have actually helped him, by aiding the paranoia, ignorance and isolation on which his regime feeds, without in any way undermining his internal power structure.

His torturers and army thugs are free to repress, murder and intimidate across most of Iraq; anyone who thinks that shortages of sugar or painkillers are going to persuade the citizens to rise up in democratic protest, doesn't know their Baghdad from their Budapest. The only way sanctions have "worked" is in making millions of ordinary Iraqis' lives almost intolerable. They have "worked" in that they have hurt children in hospital. They have "worked" because they have killed peasants whose only crime was to be born in one part of the Middle East rather

than another. Meanwhile, Western "diplomats" about killing Iraqi civilians for diplomatic ends is beginning to grow, so that one day it may rival Western unease about actually fighting.

The London conference is about a proposed expansion of the barter arrangement that allows food into Iraq in return for oil. Though Galloway and the Arab League regard this as a U.S.-British plot ultimately designed to keep a sanctions policy in place, it is also possible to read the new moves on food-for-oil as a cautious recognition that sanctions have been too brutal.

Meanwhile, in another part of the woods, the war drums are beating again. Kofi Annan's trip to Baghdad in February partially defused a crisis over the inspections. But

the inspectors are again at boiling point.

Richard Butler, the Australian diplomat who heads the U.N. team, said in a recent interview that Iraq had an opportunity over the past month to give "a full and complete declaration of past bio-weapons programmes and where they stand now... and they blew it." Butler seems to have little doubt what the effect will be when he reports to the U.N. later this week: "The last time we released a report like this, it triggered the crisis in the Gulf." William Cohen, the U.S. Defence Secretary, has made similarly tough comments during a visit to a U.S. air base in Turkey.

Saddam Hussein and his supporters clearly see the stormclouds gathering too. In interviews with Reuters they said exactly what hyped-up and perhaps terrified people always say when some despotic regime marches them in its defence against "the aggressor." Their expressions of manically patriotic determination would have translated perfectly into propaganda from Albania under Hoxha or North Korea today.

So we won't drive Saddam Hussein from power. We know sanctions don't work and we sit around in London expressing unease about their human effects. On the other hand, we might bomb Baghdad a bit just to show how cross we are. We won't kill the tiger, and we cannot starve him. So let's jab a sharpened stick through the bars and see what happens.

It is a futile wreck of a policy, even if it came about for virtuous reasons — the result of a fastidious legalism that the world probably needs. It would be more moral and humane to be less legal — to send teams of assassins into Iraq day after day or, alternatively, to offer Saddam a secure island paradise and a mound of gold for the rest of his life in return for leaving Iraq.

But whatever we do, we should lift the sanctions. They are cruel and utterly pointless. They haven't harmed a hair of Saddam's moustache. Nor will trading with Iraq make him a more dangerous man — all history suggests the opposite. Like Galloway or I, he has a simple argument that needs to be heard above titillating or smears. He is telling truth to power. Meanwhile, aren't these sanctions. The Most Odious Policy in Britain? If not, I'd like to hear what's worse.

— The Independent

JTV launches 3rd channel

(Continued from page 1)

Arabic and English.

"The new channel will not have a separate identity from the first and second channels. It will cover different issues that will help complement them," said British-educated Mr. Judeh, 37, who took over the new post as head of the Television and Radio Corporation earlier this year.

During the press conference, Mr. Judeh unveiled JTV's new logo, to be formally screened on Sunday, ahead of a four-day celebration that will start on April 27. It will be used until the end of 1998.

The Royal Crown, a symbol of the Monarchy, is embedded in an eye-shaped form at the heart of the logo, with the figure 30 situated at the end of the eye against blue-coloured background.

"Coming-up with this new logo has taken a lot of time and effort," he said adding that JTV had placed ads in local dailies seeking specialised agencies to help develop the new image. However, JTV staff provided the final product.

"We benefited from suggestions sent by several agencies which we used to develop our own ideas and perspectives," Mr. Judeh said.

The logo will have many versions that will be used to mark programme intermissions, including a

still image of the picture described earlier and a longer 30-second version that starts with animation and ends with the logo form," he added.

"Our focus was placed mainly on transporting a better visual concept with a futuristic perspective," said Rania Khouri, member of the JTV team responsible for implementing JTV's facilities.

She said images of the new logo start with different sites and scenery from areas around Jordan reflecting all aspects of life, ranging from urban to rural, and end with the main logo form.

Mr. Judeh said a new set of programmes will be transmitted during the April 27-30 celebrations that will provide viewers a glimpse of JTV's upcoming programme cycle to be launched on May 1, also marking International Labour Day.

Mr. Judeh and other JTV officials said the new cycle will have a wider variety of programmes dealing with different aspects of today's world.

"The change is not a marginal one. Rather, it heralds a new phase in JTV's history," Mr. Judeh said.

New programmes will feature women and family issues, live talk shows and contests, a hidden camera programme, new children programmes, classic JTV productions and drama work.

A contest show called

"Remember and Win" will host retired JTV staff including old anchormen and women as well as directors and technicians.

He said he hoped the new programmes and logo will help the audience identify with JTV channels.

JTV will launch three talk shows a week — political, economic and press-oriented — in which JTV will receive live questions from the public, a novelty in Jordan but common on other Arab TV stations.

The new facilities also includes a restructuring of Jordan's five-year-old satellite channel to help boost the country's image abroad and reflect its modernisation.

Mr. Judeh said that comparing JTV's performance with a host of competing satellites aiming various programmes did not pose a threat to JTV.

"Comparison helps us reevaluate our performance," he said.

He said channels should be evaluated from a wider perspective, not by one or two successful programmes but by their general policy and performance.

"We cannot claim perfection, but we always aim at improving," he said.

Forum must rejuvenate, tackle inter-Arab issues

(Continued from page 1)

Ali Attia, adding that the impact of globalisation on nation building should be discussed.

The first item to be discussed at the general assembly meeting today, will be a report evaluating the performance of the Forum since its inception in 1981. A number of policy recommendations regarding the nature of the Forum

and how to make it more effective, will be reviewed by the board of directors.

"The Forum objectives are not going to be subjected to change, but there are recommendations regarding the composition of the board, and frequency of elections," Dr. Attia told the Jordan Times.

These policy issues have already been reviewed in last year's meeting, but will be submitted to the ATF's

general assembly during today's session.

The agenda will also tackle funding and how to ensure the Forum's financial independence. The Forum has been struggling through financial constraints, but, Dr. Attia remarked, "this problem is common to all non-governmental organisations that do not have any claim on the budgets of any state."

The establishment of an

endowment for the Forum has been recommended to secure a minimum income that would meet current expenses. Another means of raising funds is by eliciting the support of more institutions from the private sector through membership fees, said Dr. Attia.

Among the topics that will also be discussed is inter-Arab relations. "The general feeling is that Arab-Arab relations should have

a high priority. The discord among various Arab regimes is chronic and frequent."

"It is felt that there is a need to analyse this issue to prevent lack of communication among Arab governments on issues of common concern not only to the present generation, but also to future generations," Dr. Attia said.

Dialogue, based on facts, is road to Arab renaissance

(Continued from page 1)

its glorious form.

"Acting from our principles and interests and in harmony with ourselves we ought to give intellect priority over political emotions," added Prince Hassan.

He called on the Arab Nation to adopt a sound regional system of behaviour defining the rights and duties of all people and nations in the region, adding that this approach should be based on the concept of building bridges of cooperation and on respect of other nations' rights.

Prince Hassan underlined the importance that only competent and qualified

people assume responsibility so as to prevent anarchists from imposing their own agenda on others.

Referring to Islam, the Regent described it as a source of peace, co-existence and security that has never preached killing or chaos. He called for intensified efforts on the part of Muslims to salvage the image of Islam from the distortion to which it has been exposed.

He urged the Arab Nation to deal with world developments in a manner that would best serve its own interests and save it from the risk of facing political or social abuse.

The Regent pointed out that among the challenges

facing Arabs is the trend of creating international economic blocs, reminding his audience that the world is now witnessing a new reality in international relations.

He said that the Arab region should seek to establish its own role and status among these blocs rather than remaining marginal.

Referring to a recent meeting between western and south-eastern nations in London, the Crown Prince said that the meeting excluded the countries of western Asia which enjoy 70 per cent of the world's sources of energy. He said that the world is rapidly moving towards the market economy, however, unfor-

tunately, this concept in our region is based on dealing in arms and trading oil.

He said that the world should pay more attention to comprehensive social, economic and cultural security.

Warning against divisions in the Arab World, the Regent said the common denominator should be a call for reforms and for reconciliation which must serve as a meeting point leading eventually to consensus and common political appeal.

"If we want innovation we ought to aim at creativity in the coming decade," the Crown Prince stressed. "The time has come for activating social and politi-

cal institutions and for objectively examining our problems and the challenges facing the Arab World, and we should attain at least the minimum level of solidarity and cooperation to serve national causes," he added.

Noting that Jordan more than other Arab states directs its attention to inter-Arab trade, the Regent said that it was necessary to promote economic and trade relations among Arab countries.

Urging Arab states to shoulder their responsibilities, Prince Hassan said that "this is needed so that we would not fall prey to terms dictated on us by others."

Saudi government still paying arrears despite low oil price

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Saudi Arabia will honour its promise to pay billions of dollars in arrears to local farmers and contractors this year despite a plunge in its oil income, analysts said Saturday.

The world's leading oil producer and exporter has approved the payment of more than four billion dollars in outstanding domestic debt, including nearly \$1.5 billion to farmers for orders made over the past two years.

Bankers in Riyadh said around 2.2 billion Saudi riyals (\$586 million) were paid this month while another instalment of three billion riyals (\$800 million) would be released in August or September.

The bulk of the arrears were in return for government purchases in 1996 and 1997 of wheat, barley and other crops from local farmers as part of its policy to encourage domestic farm production in the desert Gulf country.

"The Saudi government is now giving priority to

tackling the arrears problem and I don't think it will allow a repetition of the debt accumulation problem in the past years," Saudi economic expert Ihsan Abu Huleika said.

"There is a three-year repayment plan endorsed in 1996... Payments are taking place according to the plan without delay. The decline in the oil revenues will have no impact on such payments this year."

Saudi Arabia, which controls more than a quarter of the world's oil reserves, lost control of its debt to domestic farmers and contractors following the 1991 Gulf War as it paid more than \$50 billion to finance a U.S.-led offensive to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi forces.

The contributions sapped its overseas reserves and boosted overall expenditure to a record \$71.3 billion in 1991, according to official figures. This pushed up the budget deficit to an all-time high of \$31 billion, nearly 27 per cent of the gross

domestic product.

Bankers said the arrears problem eased after a surge in oil prices in 1996 and 1997 fetched the kingdom nearly \$15 billion in extra income.

"Saudi Arabia did not pay farmers and contractors for three years after the Gulf crisis. But the problem is now under control," a banker said.

In 1996 alone, payments to farmers and contractors peaked at 22 billion riyals (\$5.9 billion) while the sum was lower the following year.

Such payments have been met through annual budget allocations but they still constitute a burden on the country's coffers, which are struggling to cope with growing domestic development needs and fluctuating oil prices.

"The government wants to put the arrears problem behind its back so it will be able to concentrate on other economic issues," Abu Huleika said.

"I don't think there is any trend to allow a recurrence

of the post-war problem, which affected the economic and financial situation."

In contrast with the previous two years when oil prices were as high as \$18-\$20, they are now as weak as \$12-\$14 and are projected by the end of the year to be much lower than their 1996-1997 average.

Economists said such a decline could sharply widen Saudi Arabia's budget deficit unless it cuts actual spending. They noted Riyadh had assumed an oil price of between \$15 and \$16 for its 1998 spending of \$52.2 billion, one of the highest levels in a decade.

According to Henry Azzam, chief economist at the Saudi National Commercial Bank, the shortfall could swell to 40 billion riyals (\$10.66 billion) from a forecast 18 billion riyals (\$4.8 billion) if crude prices averaged around \$14 this year.

Oman may cut spending on low oil price — minister

DUBAI (R) — Oman's economy minister said in remarks published Saturday that low oil prices could force the government to take steps that include cutting spending.

But Economy Minister Ahmad Bin Abdul-Nabi Mekki told a United Arab Emirates newspaper he expected prices to pick up in the second half of 1998 after some oil producers agreed in March to reduce output.

"In the short-term, there is no doubt that the big decrease in oil prices influences the general budget of the sultanate as the price assumed in the budget is \$15 a barrel," he told the Arabic daily Al-Bayan.

Benchmark Brent crude for June delivery was last quoted at \$13.90 a barrel. "It is naturally the case that these developments demand that measures are taken from the side of the government," the minister said.

He described the Riyadh agreement as a "step in the right direction."

He said Oman was working to diversify its economy and planned to reduce the contribution of oil to gross domestic product to about nine per cent in 2020 from 41 per cent in 1996.

not expected to linger at low levels in the next few months and we hope that all oil exporting states, especially OPEC states, apply the agreement on production quotas appropriate with the requirements of the market, and comply with these quotas," the minister said.

Members of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and some non-members announced an agreement in Riyadh on March 22 to cut output by some 1.5 million barrels per day.

Oman, a small independent oil producer, cut production by 30,000 bpd at the start of April from its output of 900,000 bpd.

"I think that the average price of oil for 1998 will be better than the present levels," the minister said.

He described the Riyadh agreement as a "step in the right direction."

He said Oman was working to diversify its economy and planned to reduce the contribution of oil to gross domestic product to about nine per cent in 2020 from 41 per cent in 1996.

Italy lends \$67m to Lebanon for infrastructure

BEIRUT (AFP) — Italy has given a soft loan of 120 billion lire (\$67 million) and a grant of 4.4 billion lire (\$2.5 million) to finance infrastructure projects in Lebanon, officials said Saturday.

The accord was signed by Italian Deputy Foreign Minister Rino Serri and Nabil Jisr, president of the Council of Development and Reconstruction (CDR) — the Lebanese government's reconstruction arm.

The Italian loan, to be repaid over 35 years with a 24-year grace period and an interest rate of 0.5 per cent, will fund water installations as well as environment and technology projects

in the agricultural sector, they said.

The loan may be increased by 40 billion lire (\$22 million) once the initial budget is spent, the officials said.

The Italian grant will finance public health programmes as well as environment and technology projects in the agricultural sector, they said.

Italy, Lebanon's number one trade partner since 1975, granted in 1997 a loan of \$65 million and a grant of \$6.5 million to fund infrastructure projects in Lebanon.

Iran to streamline bureaucracy to help ailing economy

TEHRAN (AFP) — The Iranian government is to streamline economic decision-making in a bid to stimulate an economy reeling under the impact of a sharp decline in oil prices, a government official said Saturday.

The government is to entrust to "12 specialised bodies" under the authority of a single "Higher Council for Economic Development" the decisions currently taken by 33 different organisations.

"The new plan is aimed at suppressing the innumerable centres of decision-making," Abbas Arab-Mazari, deputy minister for the economy, told newspapers.

The plan, which is to be submitted to the cabinet for approval soon, is aimed at "eliminating the obstacles to savings and investments, closing the gap between income and expenditure and reducing the trade deficit," he said.

Iran's economy has deteriorated sharply over the past three months due to a sharp fall in the price of crude, its principal export, chronic inflation and a fall in the value of its currency.

Earlier this week, the government announced that it had to revise the budget forecasts it prepared in January in the light of the falling oil price.

It is now basing its calculations on a price of \$12 a barrel instead of the \$16

originally envisaged.

"We must face up to a fall of \$4 billion in our income as a result of the fall in the price of crude," President Mohammad Khatami said Wednesday, adding that the economy was "structurally sick" and that the government needed to make fundamental changes.

The falling oil price has been accompanied by a sharp decline in non-oil exports which fell by 3.1 per cent in value last year, according to Iran's customs and excise department.

Iran's economic woes have prompted increasingly open criticism in the media and widespread public discontent.

Egyptian businessmen create bank for poor

CAIRO (AFP) — A group of Egyptian businessmen announced Saturday the creation of a special bank for the poor which will loan money at favorable rates for projects promising to create more jobs.

Abdul Aziz Hegazi, one of the founders, said "the institution, which has been named 'Egyptian Hope in Aid of the Poor,' has 100 million Egyptian pounds (\$29 million) in capital."

The bank "was created by a group of businessmen in cooperation with the National Bank of Egypt," he told the government newspaper Al-Ahram.

Hegazi, an economics professor who served as prime minister from 1974 to 1975, said the bank will "offer loans with

favourable interest rates to finance mini-projects," especially outside Cairo. He said that "with the economic reforms, the unemployment rate has climbed and so it was important to promote small projects that could help the poor and create jobs."

Twenty-three per cent of Egyptians live below the poverty line, with annual income of less than 2,000 Egyptian pounds (\$588), or \$1.6 a day, according to official statistics.

In southern and central Egypt, 34 per cent of the population live below the poverty line, while in the north, 17 per cent live in poverty.

Egypt's unemployment rate is 10 per cent, according to International Monetary Fund estimates.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

1 Activist
5 Male deer
9 Get lost
14 Comparative phrase
15 Singer Guthrie
16 Classic Tierney film
17 Hanging to one side
18 River duck
19 Dark yellow
20 McMurtry's Pulitzer-Prize western
23 Lennon's widow
24 Sheens
28 Libreville's country
32 Eurasian deer
34 Son of Judah
35 One-eighties
37 Heavyweight champ of 1934
39 Spanish uncle
40 Sequel to 20A
43 Broadway smash
44 Planar or poplar
45 Frightened
46 Cupid
48 Orient
50 Stravinsky and Sikorsky
51 Act of starting over
53 Grain beard
55 Final sequel to 20A
61 "M*A*S*H" clerk
64 Observe
65 Loafing
66 Large antelope
67 Wicked
68 Dried fruits
69 Obligations
70 Carrier bag
71 Exploit

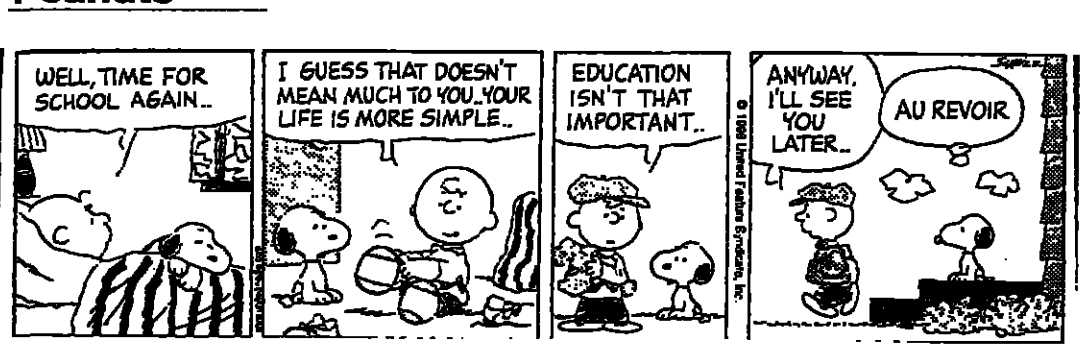
DOWN
1 Clock face
2 Scandinavian capital
3 English boys' school
4 Early Hitchcock

5 Squashed
6 Vibration
7 Having wings
8 Thin, foil decoration
9 Some Eastern Europeans
10 Revived
11 Use elbow grease
12 Exist
13 Besmirch
21 Poem of 14 lines
22 European water birds
25 Intestine: pret.
26 Shark in business
27 Nettle caps
28 Productive oil well
29 Garb
30 Lavar or Richard
31 Raw mineral
33 Woodwinds
36 Flow

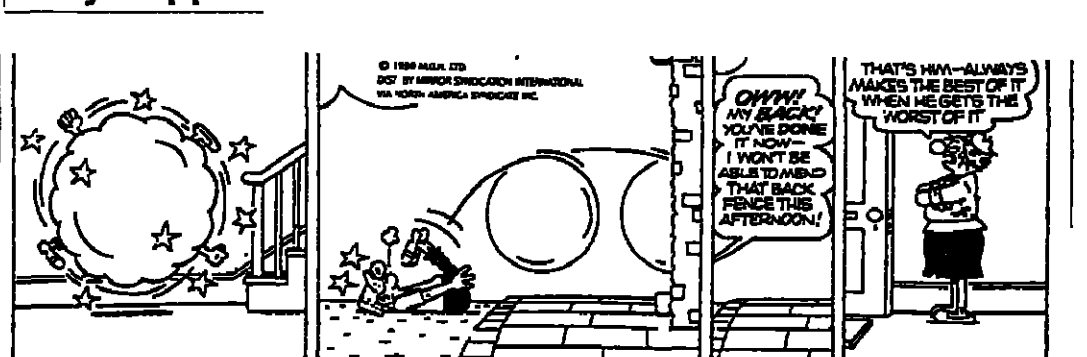
38 Wisconsin city
41 Ocean corridors
42 Old cloth
47 Reciprocal of a cosine
48 Maneuver
52 Lyrics
54 Marine snail

56 Celestial explosion
57 Offend
58 Garfield's pal
59 Russian saint
60 Make a home
61 Roulette bet
62 Pub offering
63 Touch lightly

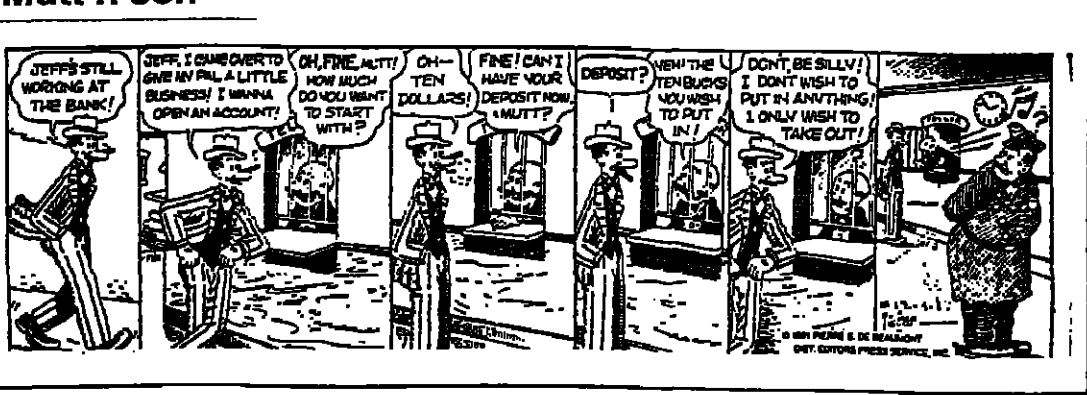
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You feel compelled to spend money. It's not a particularly good day to buy a home, or to gamble. You could invest in a work-related product, though, or in your own business. If you don't have your own business, you might start one. Not a bad idea!

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You're strong, decisive, clear-headed, and you have a charismatic power about you. Other people are interested in your opinion, and they respect it more than usual. You can be very convincing by simply being convinced yourself. And the odds are pretty good that you're right.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your assignment today may seem like drudgery, but by finishing up old business, you're making room for new creativity. For example, if you want a garden, you have to dig in the dirt. This is a marvellous day to dig a garden, by the way, but use that analogy for whatever you're up against.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You'll be invited to more parties than you can possibly attend. Everyone has some event planned. Try not to let the pace get you frazzled, and don't spend too much. Those are the only warnings for an otherwise marvellous day.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) There will be a test today. It could be a question asked by an older person. He or she is more aggressive and controversial than you're used to. If you can laugh together, the battle is just about won. And the person who comes up with the best joke is the winner.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) If you're not already far from home, you'd better get started. Half the weekend's already gone. Don't waste time squabbling about your destination. The main point is to get out for some fresh air. If there's a garden in your neighbourhood worth visiting, that's an excellent choice.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) This is a good day to balance your checkbook and pay bills. If you don't have the money, balance the checkbook and write out the bills. Just don't send them yet. You're in the mood right now, and you probably won't be later on.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) There's something you and your partner can do together that can help you both become wealthier. You might be able to involve some of your other friends, too, but don't promise to pay them yet. You need to keep costs down. Maybe you can work out a trade.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're busy as 10 hammers today, and twice as aggressive. Nobody better get in your way! If you're still fixing up your house, it looks like you could knock out a wall without thinking twice. Well, you should think twice, especially if you're renting.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your plans are completely unreasonable. However, you can make them happen. You've got motivation, commitment and talent. All you need is the right person. If you've got that too, you're absolutely unstoppable. If you don't, you may find one in an educational setting.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Your assignment today is to go along with what someone else has figured out. You'll still be coming up with good ideas, but you have to fit them into somebody else's agenda. Focus your attention outside yourself to achieve satisfaction.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) What do you want your life to look like 20 years from now? Can you even imagine that far ahead? OK, how about next year? Or five years from now? Ten? The decisions you make today could set your course in the right direction. This is going to be fun, once you get into it.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

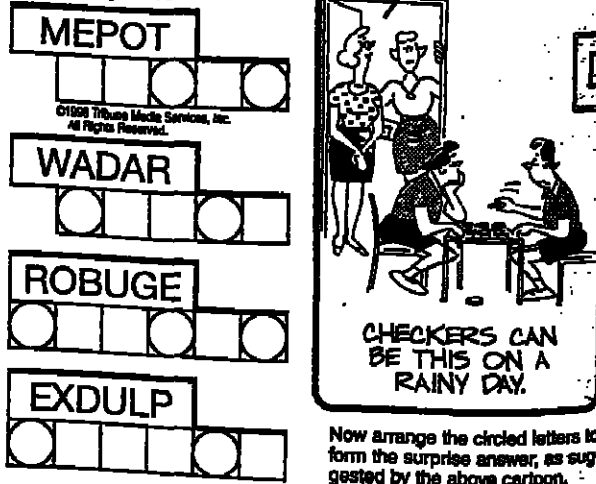
THE BETTER HALF, By Glasbergen



"In movies, a laptop computer can save the world. Mine can't even save my e-mail."

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Yesterday's Jumble: FAIRY MINOR BEHELD GUITAR
Answer: The result of cracking jokes while doing the dishes — "DRY" HUMOR

Floating of p impact a

FARMERS IN the ... expect huge losses this year as the low prices for the products ... to the central markets. We ... painful reality as a result of ... prices, which also prevent ... our obligations. They ... marketing bottlenecks, and ... unbearable stage, like ... conditions in the past ... The farmers said that ... fact, the problem with ... ing them to abandon the ... quish their active role in the ... one. The farmers saw the ... prices as having a negative ... farmers) and for the ... prices has triggered higher ... to supply of other ... where a kilogramme of ... duce sells for the entire ... the central markets. ... indicated. Ali Dayyat, another ... prices drive farmers ... play their produce because they are ... the valley are because they are ... that supplying their produce ... markets is not rewarding. The ... not cover the high cost of the ... For Mustafa Khatami, the ... sector in Jordan is getting ... from continued losses that have ...

REUTERS The Busine

Major Currencies & Cr

Currency	USD	DEM	YEN
US Dollar		1.7520	0.0074
DE Mark	0.5580		0.0074
GB Sterling	1.6675	2.9885	
CH Franc	0.8708	120.13	
JP Yen	0.0078	136.66	
CA Dollar	0.6967	1.2915	
IT Lira	0.0008	0.0111	
NL Guilder	0.4958	88.83	
FR Franc	0.1667	0.2387	

Major Commodities & Cr

Currency	USD	YEN	DEM
US Dollar		0.7098	0.0074
Jordan Dinar	1.4104		0.0074
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1590	
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.94
Oman Dinar	3.2748	0.1948	1.02
Kuwait Dinar	3.2748	2.3245	12.23
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1830	1.02
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4849	2.48
Egyptian	0.2927	0.2075	1.08

Energy

Oil	Last	Review	C
Brent	13.38	13.52	A
WTI	15.10	15.03	A
Bonny	13.38	13.52	B
Dubai	12.31	12.53	B
UL Gas	156.00	158.00	C

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	312.4	312.9
Silver (oz's)	6.25	6.28
Platinum (oz's)	410	412
AL (3 Months)	1462	1465
CU (3 Months)	1852	1857
Zinc (3 Months)	1120	1124
Lead (3 Months)	574	578
Ni (3 Months)	5520	5540

Commodity

Commodity	Last	Offer
Coffee (c/lbs)	140.33	
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1954	
Sugar (\$/ton)	251.5	
Wheat (\$/ton)	90	
Soy (c/lbs)	28.76	
Tea (kg/kg)	140	
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	
Rice (\$/ton)	410	

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NBA playoffs

Bulls beat Nets in OT

CHICAGO (AP) — The Chicago Bulls found out Friday night just how tough it's going to be to defend their championship, needing overtime to beat the ailing New Jersey Nets 96-93 after blowing a 14-point, fourth-quarter lead.

These were the same Nets who Michael Jordan said couldn't win unless Chicago fell asleep. Well, it looks like the Bulls received a wake-up call.

Like he's done so many times before, it was Jordan who rescued the Bulls. With the score tied at 91 and less than a minute left, he stole the ball from Kerry Kittles and made a three-point play to put the Bulls ahead for good.

Jordan finished with 39 points and Scottie Pippen added 24.

Chris Gatling led the Nets with 24.

Heat 94, Knicks 79: In Miami, Tim Hardaway scored 34 points and Eric Murdock added 16 off the bench as the Heat built a 24-point lead and then held on to win in Game 1 of their first-round series with New York.

There was no repeat of the disputed last-second call that cost New York a victory at Miami earlier this month, and very little of the bad behaviour that has marked the rivalry.

The only punch was Miami's inside-outside combination, which overwhelmed New York in the early going.

Larry Johnson had 21 to lead the Knicks.

SuperSonics 108, Timberwolves 83: In Seattle, Vin Baker had 25 points and 12 rebounds to lead the SuperSonics to a romp over Minnesota.

Gary Payton added 19 points and seven assists, and Detlef Schrempf tallied 17 points for the Sonics, while Kevin Garnett had 18 points and 18 rebounds and Stephon Marbury added 13 points for the Wolves.

Minnesota sealed its doom in the second quarter by shooting 3-for-24 as the Sonics pulled ahead 53-32 at the half. It was never close in the second half.

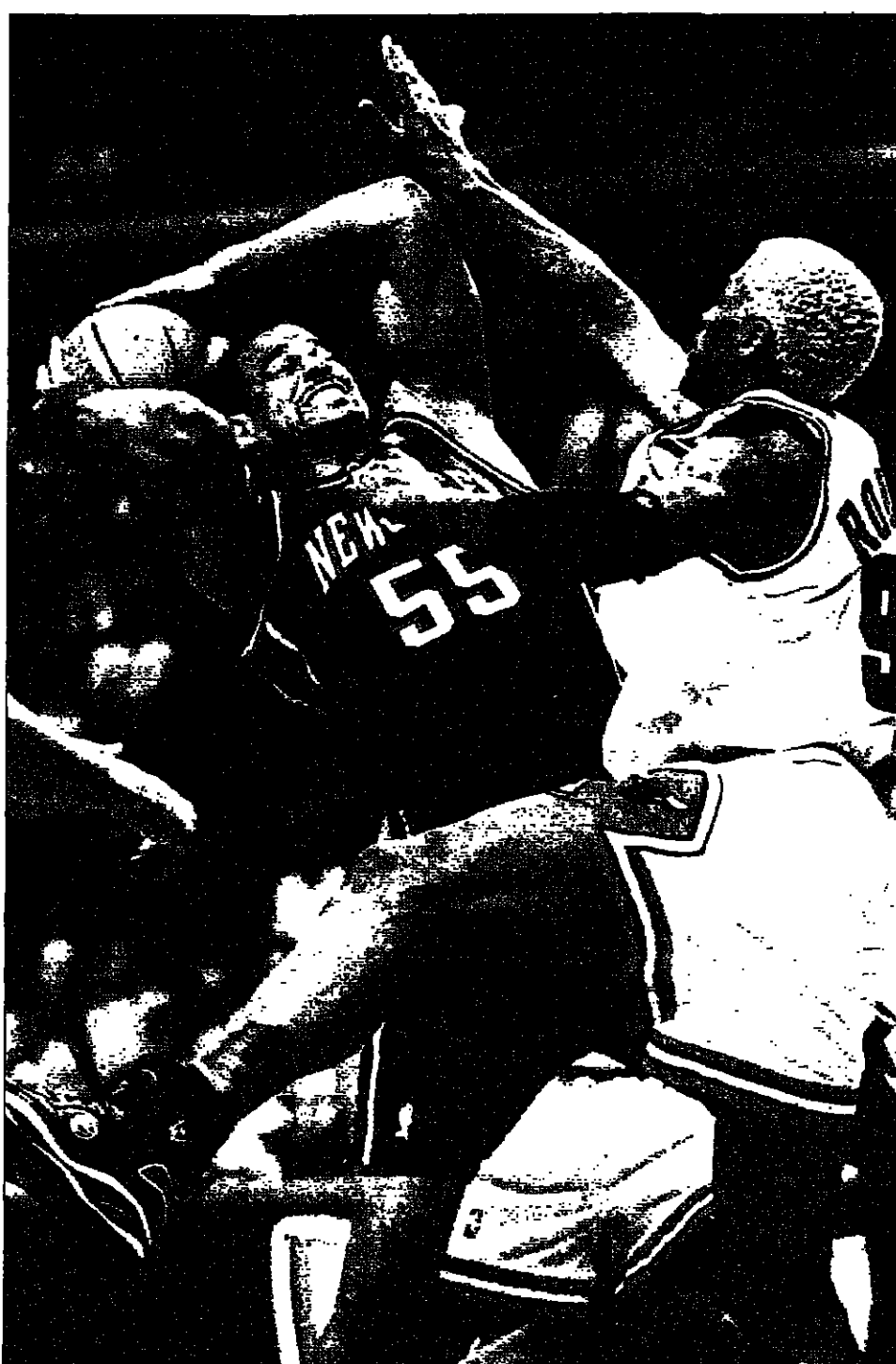
Lakers 104, Trail Blazers 102: In Inglewood, California, Kobe Bryant scored 11 of his 15 points in the last 1 1/2 minutes and Shaquille O'Neal had 18 of his 30 in the second half as Los Angeles rallied past Portland.

The Lakers went ahead for good by scoring nine straight points to turn a three-point deficit into a 93-87 lead with a little over three minutes remaining.

Gary Grant's 3-point shot with 4.7 seconds left made it 102-100 before Eddie Jones made two free throws to clinch the victory.

Nick Van Exel, Eddie Jones and Elden Campbell had 14 points each for the Lakers.

Isaiah Rider led the Blazers with 25 points.



Chicago Bulls' Dennis Rodman puts pressure on New Jersey Nets' Jayson Williams during first quarter action of the first round of the NBA playoffs in Chicago (Reuters photo)



Miami Heat center Alonzo Mourning (L) confers with referee Ron Garretson after getting fouled in Game one of the first round of the NBA Eastern Conference Playoffs against the New York Knicks. Mourning, who wears a mask for protection, is recovering from a broken cheek bone (Reuters photo)

Boksic reportedly signed with AC Milan

MILAN (AP) — Croat striker Alen Boksic is going to join AC Milan on three-year contract, the Corriere della Sera newspaper reported Saturday.

The Milan daily reported that Boksic, 28, would leave Lazio of Rome after the current soccer campaign to lead AC Milan's offense in a team with Olivier Bierhoff in the 1998-99 season.

Bierhoff, the German striker of Udinese, said recently he had agreed to transfer to the Milan powerhouse.

Lazio and AC Milan officials could not be immediately reached for a comment.

Corriere wrote that Boksic's transfer was to remain secret through the end of the month, since he is to lead the Roman side when Lazio and Milan must play their second-leg final of the Italian Cup next Wednesday.

Lazio is known to be negotiating transfer of some of its current forwards after it signed Chilean striker Marcelo Salas.

National team striker Pierluigi Casiraghi, Boksic's substitute at Lazio this season, is known to be in talks with Chelsea.

Meanwhile, Boksic fueled a bitter controversy with his Czech teammate Pavel Nedved, who accused him of thinking more of the next World Cup finals with Croatia rather than of Lazio's interests.

Boksic rejoined Lazio last year following a single season with Juventus of Turin.

Marschall's hat trick lifts Kaiserslautern to win

BERLIN (AP) — Spurred on by Olaf Marschall's hat trick Friday, FC Kaiserslautern picked up a key victory over Borussia Moenchengladbach to lift its title hopes in the Bundesliga.

Marschall stunned Moenchengladbach by lofting a long header over keeper Uwe Kamps' head in the 90th minute as the Bundesliga frontrunners scrambled from two goals back to capture a badly-needed 3-2 win.

Kaiserslautern, which let a nine-point lead slip away in recent weeks, moved four points clear of second-place Bayern Munich with the home win. Both teams have three matches left to play.

The loss by Moenchengladbach, one of the league's most storied clubs, also dimmed the team's hopes of escaping relegation for the first time in club history.

"That was a very bitter loss," said Moenchengladbach coach Friedel Rausch, fired by Kaiserslautern in 1996 and hired by his new team three weeks ago to save the five-time German champions from demotion.

Marschall, whose 17 goals are second best in the German league, turned the match around seconds before the first-half whistle

by calmly lifting a ricochet high into the left corner of the net.

In the 61st minute, the German national team player equalized when Kamp bobbled a shot by Marian Hristov, swooping in to score before the keeper could bar the ball away.

Before Marschall swung into action, Moenchengladbach dominated the first half as Markus Hausweiler scored in the 16th minute and Swedish striker Joergen Pettersson put his side up 2-0 two minutes before the half.

Munich could trim Kaiserslautern's lead back to a single point if the defending champions win a showdown Sunday against third-place Bayer Leverkusen, which is still nursing slim hopes of a title.

Hertha Berlin also salvaged a 1-1 draw at home against last-place Arminia Bielefeld, now almost doomed to relegation, on a 70th minute equalizer by Iceland's Eyjoelgur Sveinsson.

Stefan Kuntz scored an early goal for Bielefeld as 8,000 Berlin fans protested the possible firing of Hertha coach Jurgen Rober by entering Olympia stadium five minutes after play started.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Samaranch arrives

for IOC meeting

SYDNEY (AP) — International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch arrived Saturday for a seven-day tour of Olympic sites and a meeting of the IOC executive board. Samaranch, on his first visit to Australia for four years, was met at the airport at 0530 local time by 20 Olympic volunteers and officials. Samaranch is expected to rest Saturday, following the 26-hour flight, before an inspection of the core Homebush site Sunday. He will also present medals to the women's section of an international world cup triathlon event at Sydney Opera House on Sunday.

Testud upset in Budapest

BUDAPEST (AP) — China's Li Fang upset top-seeded Sandrine Testud of France in the quarterfinals of the Budapest Loto Ladies Open on Friday. The sixth-seeded Li, ranked 44th in the world, prevailed 5-7, 7-6 (7-5), 6-4, over Testud, who is 13th in the international rankings. The highest-seeded player left, No. 3 Silvia Farina of Italy, easily defeated Maria Sanchez-Lorenzo of Spain, 6-2, 6-1. Another Spaniard, seventh-seeded Virginia Ruano Pascual, breezed 6-3, 6-0, over unseeded Rita Kutik-Kis, the last Hungarian remaining in the clay-court tourney. In an all-French match, fifth seed Sarah Pitkowski downed unseeded Julie Halard-Decugis, 5-7, 6-3, 6-2.

Tyson gets travel approval

INDIANAPOLIS (APF) — Look out, Monaco. Here comes Mike Tyson. The former world heavyweight boxing champion has been given permission to attend a royal gala ball in Monaco following an invitation from its prince. Judge Patricia Gifford gave permission for the trip. As part of Tyson's probation for a 1992 rape conviction, he must receive permission to make overseas journeys.

Ripken set for 2,500th

in a row

BALTIMORE (APF) — Cal Ripken takes his world ironman record for consecutive professional baseball games to 2,500 here, continuing a streak that started in 1982. Ripken has endured back spasms, twisted ankles and sore knees. He rejected doctors' advice, for rest after suffering a herniated disk last season, what became the toughest moment of the legendary streak. "That was the hardest injury of my whole career," Ripken said. "The dilemma had nothing to do with the streak. We were in first place and headed for the playoffs so I decided I had to play through the pain." If Ripken, 37, takes the field at third base on Saturday here against Oakland, his streak will be longer than the next 22 longest active streaks combined. "Twenty-five hundred? It's a nice round number and I'm proud of it," Ripken said.

SCOREBOARD

NBA playoffs (all series best of five)

• Eastern Conference
Chicago 96 New Jersey 93 (OT)
(Chicago lead series 1-0)
Miami 94 New York 79
(Miami lead series 1-0)
• Western Conference
Seattle 108 Minnesota 83
(Seattle lead series 1-0)
LA Lakers 104 Portland 102
(Los Angeles lead series 1-0)

National Hockey League playoffs (series best-of-seven)

• Eastern Conference quarterfinals
Ottawa 8 New Jersey 1
(Series tied, 1-1)
Montreal 7 Pittsburgh 2
(Montreal leads series, 1-0)
Buffalo 6 Philadelphia 3
(Series tied, 1-1)
Boston 5 Washington 4
(Series tied, 1-1)
• Western Conference quarterfinals
San Jose 8 Dallas 1
(Dallas leads series, 2-0)
Edmonton 7 Colorado 2
(Series tied, 1-1)
Phoenix 6 Detroit 3
(Series tied, 1-1)
Los Angeles 5 St Louis 4
(St Louis leads series, 1-0)

American League

Oakland 10 Baltimore 1

Boston 7 Cleveland
Anaheim 10 Tampa Bay
NY Yankees 8 Detroit
Toronto 3 White Sox
Kansas City 11 Texas
Seattle 4 Minnesota

National League

Florida 5 Colorado
Houston 8 Montreal
Philadelphia 8 St Louis
Atlanta 6 Arizona
NY Mets 3 Cincinnati
Los Angeles 12 Chicago Cubs
Pittsburgh 4 San Diego
Milwaukee 7 San Francisco

Portuguese League

Maritimo 1 Salgueiros

German Bundesliga

Kaiserslautern 3 B. Moenchengladbach
Hertha Berlin 1 Arminia Bielefeld

Coulthard snatches pole spot

INDIANAPOLIS (APF) — David Coulthard, looking for his first Grand Prix win of the season, got a much needed boost when he snatched pole position here on Sunday for Sunday's San Marino Grand Prix.

The 27-year-old managed to hold off teammate and rival Mika Hakkinen by just 0.02-of-a-second.

"I knew Mika was going to improve from practice this morning and that qualifying would be tight, but it's good to get on pole again. It's not quite the same as in Argentina as I did at one with the car there and here we had some problems," he said.

But in the race to the first lap during Sunday's race Coulthard will have to hold off Ferrar's Michael Schumacher in the Ferrari. The German, who collided with Coulthard in the Argentina race which he lost on to win, was third here, although almost half second adrift.

Eddie Irvine will line up alongside his Ferrari teammate, creating what promises to be an explosive start between the two Ferraris.

Johnson to run at Penn Relays

PHILADELPHIA (APF) — Double Olympic champion Michael Johnson will run the Penn Relays in a leg for July's Goodwill Games in New York.

The reigning Olympic 100- and 200-meter champion will run with world champion Maurice Green, Olympic 110m hurdles champion Allen Johnson and either Alvin Harrison.

Drummond, the 200m champion, usually scheduled to compete the foursome, competed last weekend in California and will not race.

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Shahin ... in

DANTELLA (ARABIC)

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

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TITANIC

Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.

CONCORD

ISMAILIA RAYEH GAI
- KAMANANA
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

Adel Imam & Yusra ... in
RISALA ILA AL WALI
Shows: 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30

GALLERIA 2

ABDOUN

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FLUBBER

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GALLERIA 1

ABDOUN

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Sports

Coulthard snatches pole spot

IMOLA (AFP) — David Coulthard, looking for his first Grand Prix win of the season, got a much needed boost when he snatched pole position here on Saturday for Sunday's San Marino Grand Prix.

The 27-year-old managed to hold off teammate and rival Mika Hakkinen by just 0.102-of-a-second.

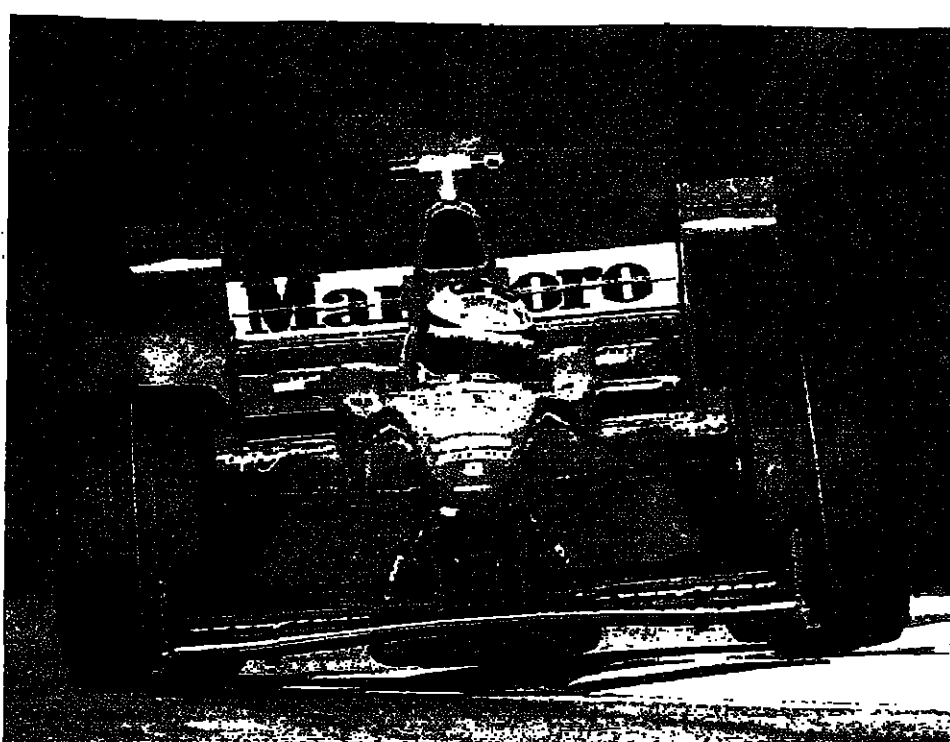
"I knew Mika was going to improve from practice this morning and that qualifying would be tight, but it's good to get on pole again."

"It's not quite the same feeling as in Argentina as I felt at one with the car there and here we had some problems," he said.

But in the race to the first bend during Sunday's race, Coulthard will have to hold off Ferrari's Michael Schumacher in the Ferrari.

The German, who collided with Coulthard in the Argentina race which he went on to win, was third fastest, although almost half a second adrift.

Eddie Irvine will line up along side his Ferrari teammate, creating what promises to be an explosive start between the two Ferraris.



German driver Michael Schumacher take a curve at wheel of his Ferrari Formula One car with the new aerons during the second free practice day of the San Marino Grand Prix at Imola track April 25. Schumacher clocked his best time of 1:27.056 (Reuters photo)

and McLaren.

It was a point not lost on Coulthard.

"Now I have just to avoid any incidents with Michael because I need to get the win for my championship chances," said the McLaren driver.

Austria's Alexander Wurz, in his first full season, continued to shine when he put his Benetton in fifth spot on the grid, ahead of defending champion Jacques Villeneuve who could do no

better than finish sixth fastest in the Williams.

Former champion Damon Hill enjoyed his best qualifying performance of the season with seventh place for Jordan although he suffered a blown engine with just seconds left in the session.

Hill finally got the better of team-mate Ralf Schumacher who had out-qualified him in the previous three races as the

revamped Jordan started closing the gap on their rivals.

The 37-year-old was lying fourth in the later stages before dropping down the order, but his time of 1:27.592 still saw him finish two places ahead of Schumacher despite the late engine glitch.

Hill was just over one-and-a-half seconds adrift of Coulthard which is an improvement on recent races.

Berasategui knocks Becker out of Monte Carlo Open

MONTE CARLO (AFP) — Spain's Alberto Berasategui showed his clay court pedigree on Friday, mounting a comeback to knock Boris Becker out in the quarter-finals of the Monte Carlo Open 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-1.

Berasategui, the 14th seed who lost the final at Barcelona last week to American Todd Martin, shrugged off a first-set tiebreak loss against the world No. 66 German, three times a finalist at the \$2.45 million event here.

The Spaniard turned the tide in his first career match against the 30-year-old Becker, levelling at one set each as Becker double-faulted to yield three set points to the seed.

He needed only one, firing over a winning passing shot.

Becker dropped serve in the fourth and sixth games of the final set before Berasategui moved into his third straight semi-final when Becker netted a backhand.

Becker walked away satisfied with his own match. "Those two hours on court are what I live for," said the



Spain's Alberto Berasategui

semi-retired righthander. "I have a great time playing."

"This week gives me the belief that if I stay healthy and practise a few hours a day, I can still play with the best in the world on my least-favourite surface."

Berasategui faces a semi-final against Cedric Pioline, who won an all-French match against Fabrice Santoro.

Pioline completely missed an over-the-head backhand attempt on match point, but ran around it to make the return against fellow Frenchman Fabrice Santoro in their quarterfinal.

The tenth-seeded Pioline was then able to advance 1-6, 6-2, 6-4 into the semifinals as Santoro's final smash landed long.

Pioline had a chance a

game earlier to wrap up the proceeding against the man who knocked out Pete Sampras 6-1, 6-1 in the third round, but Santoro saved himself as Pioline lobbed long.

Berasategui said that he might need a pause before the French Open, which starts in just over four weeks. "This is my 14th or 15th match on clay this spring."

"I know I have to rest a bit. But I play Munich, Hamburg and Rome (over the next three weeks). Maybe I can rest the week before the French," the Spaniard said.

Richard Krajicek of Holland and Spain's Carlos Moya set up their semi-final with wins earlier in the day on the centre court.

Krajicek's 4-6, 7-6 (7/1) 6-1 comeback denied Czech Petr Korda a fourth chance in ten weeks to take over as World No. 1 in the ATP Tour computer rankings.

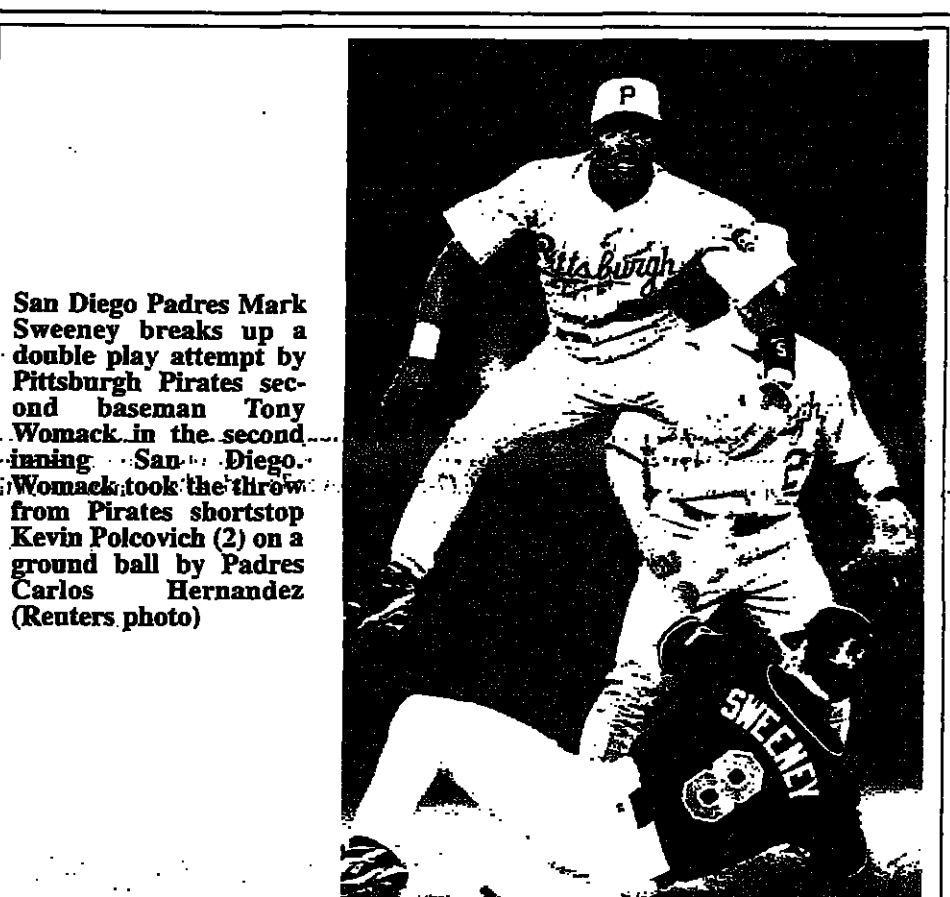
Moya, the 14th-seeded 1997 Australian Open finalist defeated sixth-seeded compatriot Alex Corretja, last year's losing finalist here to Chile's Marcelo Rios, 6-3, 6-2.

Johnson to run at Penn Relays

PHILADELPHIA (AFP) — Double Olympic champion Michael Johnson will run at the Penn Relays in a tune-up for July's Goodwill Games in New York.

The reigning Olympic 200- and 400-meter champion will run with world 100m champion Maurice Johnson, Olympic 110m hurdles champion Allen Johnson and either Alvin or Calvin Harrison.

Jon Drummond, the American 200m champion originally scheduled to complete the foursome, was injured last weekend in California and will not compete.



San Diego Padres Mark Sweeney breaks up a double play attempt by Pittsburgh Pirates second baseman Tony Womack in the second inning. San Diego Womack took the throw from Pirates shortstop Kevin Polcovich (2) on a ground ball by Padres Carlos Hernandez (Reuters photo)

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Florida (AP) — Defending champion Michael Chang and Jim Courier moved into the semifinals of the U.S. Clay Court Championships with convincing victories over overmatched opponents Friday.

Chang, the top seed, beat Brazil's Marcio Carlsso 6-3, 6-1 and the third-seeded Courier swept the first eight games en route to a 6-0, 6-3 victory over Germany's Marcello Craca.

Earlier, Romanian Andrei Pavel won his ninth straight match, defeating Alex Calatrava of Spain 6-4, 2-6, 6-4 to advance to the semifinals against Courier. The fourth spot went to

Sweden's Mikael Tillstrom, who ousted Australia's Andrew Ilie 6-3, 6-3.

Chang connected on 60 percent of his first serves and faced only one break point. He took command by breaking Carlsso's serve in the fourth game for a 3-1 lead.

After serving out the set 6-3, Chang allowed the 153rd-ranked Carlsso to open the second set by holding serve before sweeping the last six games, closing out the match with two clean forehand winners.

Reaching the semifinals of one of the five events he won last year is Chang's best result since suffering a partial tear of the medial collateral ligament of his

left knee March 5. Chang elected not to have surgery.

"They told me at the time that it would take two to four weeks to heal," Chang said, "but it actually took a lot longer than that to get rid of the pain and begin to feel strong again."

But today everything definitely felt pretty good out there.

Courier made his match with Craca look easy. For the "mid" straight match, Courier allowed an opponent only three games, although in beating Craca he was forced over the one hour mark for the first time — by one minute.

Craca was able to hold serve only once.

"That's my game," Courier said. "That's what I have to do, impose my will on the other guy and force him to respond to what I'm doing. If I'm playing well, generally speaking, I'm running the other guy around the court and hopefully he's feeling pressured to maybe come up with something better than he's got."

Courier, formerly the top player in the world, but now ranked 57th, will face a tough opponent in Pavel.

Pavel, who won the Japan Open in Tokyo last week for his first ATP Tour title, has improved his world ranking to 68th after starting the year at 109th.

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Initial engagement is for one year subject to an initial three-month probationary period. This position is renewable annually thereafter for up to three additional years based upon satisfactory performance.
The requirement is immediate and starting date is as soon as possible. All interested and qualified applicants are immediately requested to fax their CV to 560-3599 Attention: Senior Trade Economist, AMIR program, Shmeisani, Amman, Jordan for consideration. No telephone inquiries please.
Deadline for receipt of applications is April 30, 1998
Only candidates selected for an interview will be acknowledged.

Mubarak says U.K. vows to crack down on 'terrorists'

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said Saturday he has secured a promise from British Prime Minister Tony Blair to crack down on Islamists sheltering in his country, the media reported Saturday.

The British prime minister has promised that his government will tighten the noose around those belonging to extremist groups and will not authorise any violent or terrorist activity," Mr. Mubarak told Egypt's MENA news agency.

Mr. Mubarak said he secured from Mr. Blair during their meeting in Cairo a week ago a commitment "not to allow Britain to be used as a launch-pad (for attacks) or a refuge for fugitives and terrorists," MENA reported.

In Cairo at the start of his Middle East tour, Mr. Blair

promised to bring forward proposals for counter-terrorism laws amid complaints by Egypt that it provided a safe-haven for Islamic militants.

"I believe Britain is really serious about the fight against terrorism because it wants to preserve its interests in the Middle East and it knows that if stability is threatened everyone will pay the price," Mr. Mubarak was reportedly quoted by the Egyptian government newspaper Al Gomhuriya.

More than 1,360 people have been killed in Egypt in confrontations between Islamists and the authorities since March 1992, when the violent campaign to overthrow the government and set up an Islamic state began.

Russia decides against pushing vote on Iraq's nuclear program

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Russia is calling for an end to wide-ranging inspections of Iraq's suspected nuclear facilities but decided against pushing for a vote on the proposal when the Security Council reviews Iraqi sanctions next week.

Diplomats said the Russians apparently want time to win over the United States and Britain, who have taken the hardest line against Iraq on the issue of sanctions and Baghdad's suspected illegal weapons programmes.

Russian Ambassador Sergey Lavrov confirmed Friday he had circulated a proposal among the 15 council members to shift from "intrusive" inspections to long-term monitoring and surveillance of Iraq's nuclear program.

He cited a report this month by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that says it found no indication that Iraq was still trying to construct nuclear arms.

The Security Council meets Monday to review the status of the 7-year economic sanctions on Iraq.

"I'm sure we are not going to table it," Mr. Lavrov said of the proposal. "We submitted it only yesterday, and... we want others to have time to react," Mr.

Lavrov said "it is time for the council to recognise" the findings of the latest IAEA report. Mr. Lavrov said he would make this argument during Monday's council meeting even if he did not submit a formal resolution.

If approved, the Russian proposal would not end all international surveillance of Iraq's nuclear research programmes. But it would shift to "passive monitoring" of known Iraqi research facilities.

It would sharply curtail the wide-ranging investigations of suspected clandestine nuclear research facilities, which the IAEA has carried out since 1991 along with the U.N. Special Commission, which is looking for banned long-range missiles and biological and chemical weapons.

Such a resolution, if approved, would have no effect on the commission's inspections for missiles, chemical and biological weapons.

Both the commission and the IAEA must certify that Iraq has dismantled all proscribed weapons before the Security Council will lift economic sanctions imposed in 1990 after President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

Last week, the executive

chairman of the U.N. Special Commission, Richard Butler, reported it had made "virtually no progress" over the last six months in determining whether Iraq is still holding long-range missiles and chemical and biological weapons.

In Washington, State Department spokesman James Rubin said Iraq must first provide more information about previous efforts to conceal its secret nuclear research programme.

As a permanent council member, Washington could veto the Russian proposal, although the Americans would prefer not to do so to avoid appearing isolated on the sensitive Iraq issue.

Diplomats say there is considerable support within the 15-member council for acknowledging Iraqi progress in the nuclear field.

British Ambassador John Weston said his government did not oppose acknowledging progress but considered the Russian proposal "unbalanced."

In Paris, French Foreign Ministry spokesman Yves Dourlhaux said Iraqi progress in the nuclear area "seems clearly very significant" and it seemed time to end the inspections and shift to long-term surveillance.

Turk court formally arrests seized Kurd rebels

ANKARA (R) — A Turkish state security court on Saturday formally arrested two top Kurdish rebel guerrillas snatched two weeks ago by special forces, Anatolian news agency said.

An undercover special forces team seized Semdin Sakik, known as fingerless Zeki, and the second top man in the outlawed separatist group Kurdish Labour Party (PKK), and his brother in the Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq on April 13.

They have since been held under high security while charges were formally prepared. The arrest order issued in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir followed a 12-hour interrogation through the night by four prosecutors. It marks a major step towards the trial of Sakik, the highest ranking rebel captured in the 13 years of conflict, and his brother.

Sakik had defected to an Iraqi Kurd group after splitting with PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan in a row over tactics.



CRYING FOR GROWTH: One-year-old Kohei Inami held by an amateur Sumo wrestler breaks into tears first to beat fellow toddler Sanshiro Ishikawa during a baby crying contest at Sensoji temple in Tokyo Saturday. More than 60 toddlers who were born in 1997 participated in the contest at the temple where babies who cried first and cried loudest won honours. The traditional baby crying contest is held nationwide in the belief that it will ensure the healthy growth of participating babies (Reuters photo)

Israeli negotiator: Peace with Syria was imminent in 1996

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel was on the brink of reaching a peace agreement with Syria two years ago, Israel's former chief negotiator said Friday.

Uri Savir, who led the Israeli negotiating team in U.S.-hosted talks with the Syrians, said that a secret negotiating channel had been set up after Syrian President Hafez Assad responded verbally and "positively" to an Israeli call for establishing full diplomatic relations.

According to Savir, then Prime Minister Shimon Peres had sent two letters to Mr. Assad — written on official stationery — calling for the sides to reach a peace agree-

ment. The letters and Mr. Assad's response were relayed by U.S. special envoy Dennis Ross.

In a book to be published next week, Mr. Savir for the first time divulges that, following the exchange of messages, the two sides held secret meetings in Washington to try and hammer out an agreement.

Then-Israeli ambassador to Washington Itamar Rabinovich was not present at the meetings, Mr. Savir said.

"Peres had never talked about territorial issues but it was clear to all that what was being talked about was a complete withdrawal from the Golan Heights," said Mr.

Savir, who claimed that an agreement would have been reached in "half a year or nine months." Such revelations could shed some light on the gaps between Israeli and Syrian positions for resuming the negotiations, which came to a halt in February 1996.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, along with others in his government, has called for the resumption of talks. But Syria insists the negotiations resume from the point where they left off — namely honouring a tacit agreement in which Israel reportedly agreed to withdraw from the disputed Golan Heights in exchange for peace.

Italian deputy flies to Libya in defiance of U.N. embargo

TRIPOLI (AFP) — A right-wing Italian MP arrived here aboard a chartered plane Friday in defiance of a U.N. ban on flights imposed over Libya's failure to cooperate with inquiries into the 1988 Lockerbie bombing of a U.S. airliner.

"Two aircraft hired by right-wing Italian MP Vittorio Sgarbi... flew directly to Tripoli airport," the official Libyan news agency JANA reported.

The Italian Foreign Ministry said the MP was visiting Libya on his own personal initiative and had given no advance notice of his intention to defy the U.N. ban.

On his arrival, Mr. Sgarbi

criticised "the unjust embargo" imposed on Libya which he blamed on the United States, JANA reported.

He said he knew his trip would give him "a string of problems with the Italian authorities."

Mr. Sgarbi told reporters before leaving that he was heading to Tripoli in a bid to assist an Italian national, Marcello Sarrizzi, whose passport was confiscated by the Libyan authorities last June.

"Violating the embargo in this case is a humanitarian and civil act to try and find a quick solution to the problem," he said.

He was accompanied on his

trip by Italian businessman Nicola Grauso. The pair chartered two six-seater planes for the trip and left Italy from Sarrizzi's native town of Cagliari, in Sardinia.

The U.N. Security Council imposed the flight ban and a similar ban on arm sales in 1992 following Libya's refusal to hand over two suspects in the bombing of a U.S. airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people.

Libya says the suspects would not receive a fair trial in Scotland or the United States and says it will only cooperate with a trial held in a neutral third country.

Mossad spies in Bern released

BERN (AFP) — An Israeli undercover agent held in Switzerland since a bungled telephone tapping operation was allowed to leave the country Saturday on condition that he returns to appear in court, a judge said.

Swiss police arrested six agents of Israel's Mossad intelligence service in the early morning of Feb. 19 as they reportedly tried to tap the telephone of a Swiss-based member of the Lebanese guerrilla movement Hizbollah.

Most of the agents were released before the Swiss realised who they were and immediately returned to Israel.

The Israeli who was detained appeared before a magistrate for a final hearing Friday before being released, a statement by an examining magis-

trate said.

"Investigations into the case have been completed, there is no longer danger of collusion," it continued.

The court had accepted assurances from the Israeli government guaranteeing that the agent would keep his word and comply with any summons to appear in court in Switzerland.

A substantial surety had also been deposited.

Israel's attorney general, Elyakim Rubinstein, went to Switzerland to negotiate the release of the Israeli agent kept in custody.

According to a Swiss statement at the time, Mr. Rubinstein had acknowledged that Swiss law was violated by the Mossad agents and had passed on the "Israeli govern-

ment's wish to have the enquiry conclude as quickly as possible."

Swiss authorities said the Mossad agent had admitted he had been prepared "to violate telephone secrecy and accomplish a mission for his country in the struggle against terrorism, to save lives and to contribute to preventing other attempted murders by Hizbollah," the federal examining magistrate said in the statement.

Investigations had begun Feb. 19 against the Mossad agent "for acts carried out illegally for a foreign state, for political intelligence and military intelligence to the prejudice of a foreign state," the magistrate's statement said.

King Fahd considers pardon for nurses

RIYADH (AP) — King Fahd is considering an appeal seeking pardon for two British nurses jailed in Saudi Arabia, newspapers reported Saturday.

The families of Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan have sent a written appeal to King Fahd asking him to pardon and release the nurses, the papers reported.

King Fahd is currently "considering with compassion" the request, the Al Riyadh newspaper said, quoting Saudi Ambassador to England Ghazi Al Gosaibi.

Parry and McLauchlan were convicted in the murder of Australian nurse Yvonne Gilford in August 1997, but

have been in jail in the eastern Saudi city of Dammam since their arrest in December 1996.

"We have learned that justice in the kingdom has taken its course and the matter has ended by reaching a legal verdict and that the case is now in your hands and that you have the right to pardon..." said the letter carried in Arabic by the papers.

"We submit this appeal to you on humanitarian grounds hoping that you would issue a pardon for the two nurses and order their release as soon as possible," said the letter signed by McLauchlan's husband Grant Parry and Parry's sister and brother-in-law Sandra and

Jonathan Ashbee.

Ferrie and McLauchlan were married in Saudi Arabia in November.

Ms. Parry, 39, was convicted of stabbing Gilford to death, but escaped beheading when Ms. Gilford's brother waived his right to demand the death penalty in exchange for money, as allowed by Saudi law. She is awaiting sentencing.

Ms. McLauchlan, 32, was found guilty of being an accessory and sentenced in September to eight years in prison and 500 lashes.

The lashing has not been carried out yet.



Oldest U.S. film festival opens

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The 41st San Francisco International Film Festival, the oldest of its kind in the United States, has opened with a screening of Brian Gilbert's movie "Wild," on the life of writer and wit Oscar Wilde. A gala opening was held late Thursday with actress Sharon Stone, who lives in San Francisco since her recent marriage to local journalist Phil Bronstein.

Oscar-winning actor Nicolas Cage received the Peter J. Owens prize in honour of the festival's founder. The festival will show 174 U.S. and foreign films, including a three-hour documentary on the life of Italian actor Marcello Mastroianni.

Mali man held in New Jersey phone card scam

JERSEY CITY (R) — A West African man has been charged with stealing more than a thousand telephone calling card numbers, many of them by looking over the shoulders of callers at a New York City railroad station, officials said. They said many of the numbers stolen were issued by Bell Atlantic Corp. and AT&T, but the number of companies affected by the scam was not disclosed. Authorities alleged Cheick Hamalla Dama, a part-time bus driver from Mali, used the numbers to call Africa, Europe, and was also selling the numbers. Some of them were traced to Chinese nationals in Washington, D.C. who used them to make more than \$257,000 worth of calls.

Minister's energy-saving drive runs into trouble

LONDON (AFP) — Britain's Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott was left red-faced Saturday after he took the controls of a mock-up of a new solar-powered car — and then pranged it. Prescott, who has been criticised for using his gas-guzzling Jaguar, was not caught enough on the brakes of the dark blue environmentally-friendly car, specially produced by Honda for a television advertisement. Minutes earlier he was explaining the benefits of using the sun's rays to power new modes of transport.

Carry On celebrates 40 years of sexual innuendo

LONDON (R) — Britain's "Carry On" films, which turned sexual innuendo into an art form, are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the first rib-tickling movie being released. The celluloid equivalent of the dirty seaside postcard, launched in 1958 with "Carry On Sergeant", won an unlikely cult following around the world with predictable gags that made audiences both laugh and groan. "Good old honest smut" was how the late actor Kenneth Williams once described the films in which he often starred as a camp "Queen of Double Entendre."

Colombia to give slain drug lord's ranch to poor

BOGOTA (AFP) — Colombian President Ernesto Samper will give a ranch that once belonged to slain drug lord Pablo Escobar to 100 families displaced by fighting, an official said. The Naples ranch in northwest Colombia has farmland, cattle and fishing, and was expropriated by the government after Escobar was killed by police in Medellin in December 1993. The ranch also has a zoo, according to Cesar Garcia, the president's advisor for displaced persons, who announced the donation.

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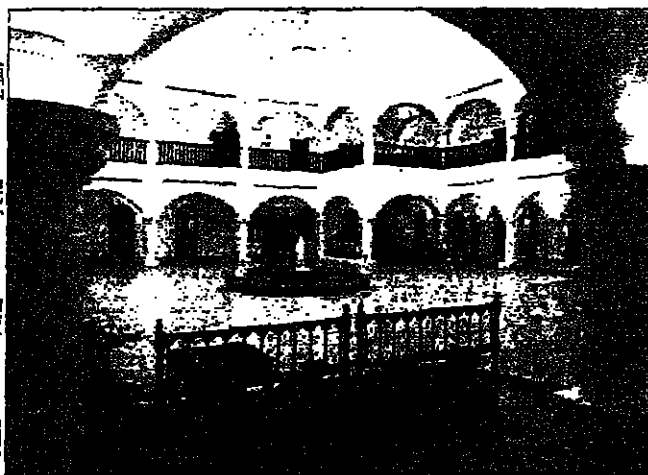
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Crown Prince visits to

AMMAN (R) — Crown Prince El Hassan bin Talal and his wife, Queen Zaira, visited the late Queen Zaira's funeral home in Amman on Saturday to pay tribute to the late monarch. HRH Prince Mohammad bin Al Hussein, HRH Princess Alia and their family members and relatives attended the funeral.

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TEL AVIV (AFP) — U.S. mediators have failed to break the Israeli hard line over the key issue of West Bank troop withdrawals as they shuttle Sunday between Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Martin Indyk and Special Middle East Envoy Dennis Ross met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for a second time on Sunday after three hours of talks the previous evening.

But the talks failed to win any progress towards evening Mr. Netanyahu's opposition to U.S. proposals for a long-overdue Israeli troop pullback from the West Bank.

In the evening Mr. Ross and Mr. Indyk were to meet in Gaza City with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, whose aides repeated calls for the United States to force Israel to accept its proposal.

The latest U.S. mission aims to pave the way for separate meetings in London between U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and the two leaders, during which Washington has said it will put its package proposal on the table.

But in a sign of the Israeli government's hard-line, Mr. Netanyahu's officials denied the troop pullback issue at the heart of the U.S. package proposal.

Mr. Netanyahu and the U.S. mediators have not yet begun to tackle the controversial issue of the size of a troop withdrawal, Mr. Netanyahu's press officer, David Bar-Ilan, said.

"There has been no discussion of numbers per se with the Americans," Mr. Bar-Ilan said.

Mr. Bar-Ilan said U.S. mediators must "first resolve the issue of Palestinian compliance to a series of Israeli demands over a crackdown on anti-Israeli groups before tackling the withdrawals issue."

He said Washington should instead focus on selling deals over a series of side issues, particularly the opening of an airport and joint industrial zone in Gaza.

"The top priority of the

(Continued on page 3)

Israel at 50: Is

By Howard Goller

TEL AVIV — Israel celebrates half a century of statehood this week facing a battery of heavy weight U.S. envoys aiming to push it closer to its founding dream of peace with its Arab neighbours.

U.S. envoy Dennis Ross, whose country has remained Israel's closest ally since the 1948 armistice, arrived in Israel yesterday to mark the 50th anniversary of the state's founding.

His aim is to get Israelis and Palestinians to take another self-imposed deadline for a five-year peace deal 55 weeks away.

Israel's founder, late Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister, signed a declaration of independence.

The document offered "peace and good neighbourliness" to neighbouring Arab states and their peoples.

Israel has since made peace with Egypt in 1979 and with Jordan in 1994.